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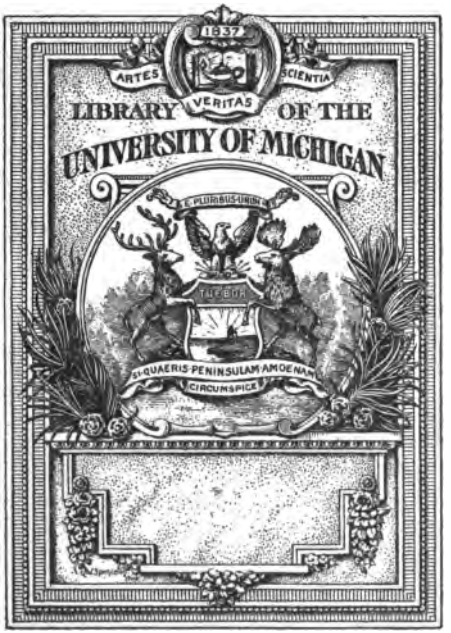
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MEMOIRS AND RESOLUTIONS

OF

ADAM GRAEME,

99380

OF MOSSGRAY.

INCLUDING SOME CHRONICLES OF THE BOROUGH OF FENDIE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF MRS. MARGARET MAITLAND,"
"MERKLAND," AND "CALEB FIELD."

Mrs Oliphant

"So he bore without abuse
The grand old name of gentleman."

TENNYSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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BOOK II.

RESOLUTIONS.

(*Continued.*)

ADAM GRAEME

OF

MOSSGRAY.

CHAPTER VII.

Curls are on her brow, not clouds,
Smiles are in her eye,
Simple, brave, 'mong worldly crowds
Looks she to the sky.
Joy dwells with her every day,
Sorrows touch her as they pass,
Fearless goes she on her way
O'er the springing grass,
Daunting evil passengers
With those clear brave eyes of hers.

BALLAD.

MR. GEORGE OSWALD of Fendie, was very proud of his daughter Hope; and

Hope, as we have already seen, was very fond of ponies. Young, large animals of all kinds indeed, were favourites with the favourite of the banker. A great tawny fellow of a dog, with large, disjointed, youthful limbs, whose uncouth gambols had as much fun, and as little grace in them as could be desired, was Hope's especial playmate, counsellor, and friend. She called him Merry—(gentle playfellow of mine, over whom I could yet weep tears, so named I thee!) it was not a very musical name; but there was nothing in the least æsthetic about the happy, clumsy, kindly animal who bore it. This poor fellow fell under Mrs. Oswald's displeasure sometimes, when it was discovered that Hope's new gloves had been in the great innocent mouth, or that the big paw had left its print upon Hope's garments too legibly; but the banker amply tolerated Merry.

On the morning of Hope's intended visit to Mount Fendie, her father led her proudly away to the vicinity of the stable where his own horses were kept, and where, at its door stood the red-headed Oswald Thomson, son of a retainer of the family, holding by the bridle a handsome pony, apparelled as became the steed of a lady, and arching its fine brown neck in conscious pride, under the eye of its future mistress.

"Oh, father, is it for me?" exclaimed the delighted Hope; "is it to be mine; is it to be all mine?"

And it was; and at that moment in Hope's little chamber at home, her mother with some secret smiles over her husband's unmeasured indulgence, and some misgivings as to the youthful limbs which this new mode of conveyance might expose to danger was carefully spreading out a new riding-

habit, companion gift to the beautiful pony. Mr. Oswald had intended to bring his daughter quietly home with him, to assume the appropriate garb before she began to be an equestrian; but that did by no means suit Hope. So at dire risk to the bright muslin frock donned in unspotted purity this morning, she sprang upon the new saddle and arrived at the door radiant with laughter and exultation while her father still panted in the rear, half running in spite of his years and dignity.

Hope could not take her dog with her to Mount Fendie,—it was her sole regret as she cantered away happily alone, on the quiet familiar road. One of Merry's mighty paws would have extinguished Mrs. Fendie's lap-dog for ever; the gambols of a young elephant could not have been more detrimental to the trim gardens at the Mount.

She was compelled to leave her favourite behind.

But never did Hope salute passing acquaintances so joyously; and Hope's list of friends was as large as it was miscellaneous, extending from Mrs. Maxwell of Firthside, in her carriage, down to Robbie Carlyle, the fisherman, with the creel on his shoulders full of flounders which he had captured this morning, knee-deep in the waters of the Firth. Just before the gate of Mount Fendie was a toll—a toll which Hope paid triumphantly in presence of an admiring congregation of John Tasker's children. It was the crowning glory of her ride.

"Oh, Hope, when did you get your pony?" cried Victoria Fendie. "What a pretty one!—but it's not so pretty as Fred's either—is it, Adelaide?"

"I don't know what you call Fred's," said Adelaide, "for Fred is too little to have a

pony, but I am sure yours is very pretty, Hope. Were you not afraid?"

Fred, a little, spoiled, pale, ill-conditioned boy of eight stood on a bench in the garden, plucking the blossoms off an apple-tree. He paused to pull Adelaide's hair—it was invitingly near him—and then resumed his profitable occupation.

"I thought you would be afraid; but yours is a very pretty one, Hope," repeated the steady Adelaide, "and Fred is too little yet to have a pony."

Hope was so engrossed with the pony, its beauties and good qualities, that she had almost forgotten the object of her visit. She recollected herself at last.

"Adelaide, you have not told me, has the young lady come?"

"The young lady!—she means the governess," said Victoria.

"Oh, yes—we're all to go in now, to

begin school, and you may come with us, Hope. She came yesterday."

"And do you like her?" said Hope, out of breath.

"I don't know; we're all to begin school to-day, and you're to come with us. But you're always so quick, Hope Oswald!—how can people know in a day?"

"I know," said Victoria loudly, "I don't like her at all. She is so pale, and she speaks so low, and—I don't like her."

"Young ladies," said a clear voice behind them, "your mother desires that you will come in."

Hope turned quickly round. A tall, pale girl stood behind, evidently endeavouring to assume a firmness and authority which she did not possess. Her deep mourning dress, and shadowy stooping figure, and singular paleness touched the girlish romance which

lay dormant in the blythe spirit of Hope. Adelaide Fendie looked at the new governess hazily out of her dull blue eyes, and did not speak. The dyspeptic little tyrant Fred said "I won't," and the shrewish Victoria laughed.

Hope had learned the stranger's name, and knew her own power over Adelaide when she chose to exert it.

"If you please, Miss Maxwell," said the prompt young lady, "I'm Hope Oswald; and Adelaide was just coming in; and we'll all go together."

Whereupon Hope seized the arm of Adelaide, and brought her, docile and obedient, into the rear of the new governess.

A very little matter was enough to overset the composure of the orphan who held that unenviable place. Her eyes filled and her lip quivered; she had fancied it impossible that

children could be anything but loveable, and in the early power and bitterness of her grief to have these petty indignities put upon her, overwhelmed her inexperienced spirit. So she went in with the elder girls, painfully repressing bitter tears, and with the gasp of young woe convulsively swelling in her breast, "to flee away, and be at rest."

Mrs. Fendie sat in her morning room, before a table covered with embroideries and patterns for the same. She was a tall, thin, chill woman of the *genus* clever, who had persevered so long in calling herself an excellent manager, and a person of very intellectual tastes that public opinion had at length succumbed under the constant iteration, and with only the emphatic protest of John Brown, who in his own circle declared her, "an evendown gowk wi' a tongue like the happer of a mill," Mrs.

Fendie was pronounced a very clever woman. The natural born Fendies were all dull. The last head of the house had been fretted and chafed out of his easy life by the fatal cleverness of his yoke-fellow; and even she, their mother, had been quite unable to strike any sort of fire from the leaden natures of his children.

Beside Mrs. Fendie, stretched in an easy chair, with a worked footstool supporting the worked slipper, with which her mother's industry had endowed her, reclined the Reverend Mrs. Heavieliegh, Mrs. Fendie's eldest daughter. She was like Adelaide in her soft, large, not uncomely features, and in the passive good humour of their expression; but Mrs. Heavieliegh's development of the family character was indolence, comfortable, lazy, luxurious repose; and in her gay coloured ample draperies, and lounging

attitude, and slumbrous face, she formed a good foil to the keen, sharp steel-like mother, who worked indefatigably by her side. Mrs. Heavieliegh had no admiration of work; she played with the long ears of the lap dog on her knee, and was perfectly comfortable.

"How do you do, Hope Oswald?" said Mrs. Fendie; "how's your mamma? Sit down, children, I have something to say to you. Fred, don't pull my frame; Victoria, be quiet. Sit down, Miss Maxwell, I wish particularly to address myself to you."

Mrs. Fendie arranged her work; she was copying a French lithograph like Maggie Irving, but she was copying it with the needle and not with the pencil, and cleared her voice oratorically. Lilias Maxwell with some apparent timidity took the chair pointed to her, and sat down to listen, the great

tears gathering under her eyelids. Hope placed herself very near the new governess, in instinctive sympathy. She was not so "pretty-looking" as Adelaide had predicted. She was singularly pale and had very dark hair, and large deep-blue eyes—blue eyes so dark that Hope, to whom blue eyes always suggested the slumbrous orbs of Adelaide Fendie, gave Miss Maxwell's credit for being black. The dark mass of hair, and the mourning dress made the young orphan look still more etherial and shadowy. She was not like Hope's model, Helen Buchanan; she was not nearly so life-like, and seemed to want altogether the nervous impulsive strength of Helen. Sudden flushes indeed did sometimes pass over her colourless cheek for a moment—flushes painfully deep and vivid; but there was nothing on this face like the constantly varying colour, which

wavered on Helen's cheek like the coming and going of breath. Nevertheless, there was a similarity in the age, and perhaps in the circumstances, which made Hope associate the stranger with her friend.

"You will understand, Miss Maxwell," said Mrs. Fendie, "that I consider it a very important charge, which I, as a mother, give into your hands, when I delegate to you the care of these children. Such wonderful interests at stake! such extraordinary effects your humble teachings may help to produce! When I look at that boy," and Mrs. Fendie cast a sentimental glance at the dyspeptic Fred, "it quite overwhelms me. Oh, Fred! you wicked child, what have you been doing?"

Mrs. Fendie had chosen an unfavourable moment for her sentimental glance, the young gentleman being busily employed opening

the eyes of a scriptural personage in one of the aforesaid patterns for embroidery, by thrusting a pencil through them. On being thus pathetically appealed to, Master Fred threw down the paper, and exclaimed: "It's not me, it's Vic."

Mrs. Fendie restrained Victoria's self-defence, by a majestic wave of her hand, and resumed: "In the first place, concerning Miss Fendie—hold up your head, Adelaide." Adelaide fixed her eyes upon the wall, awkwardly conscious of being looked at, and blushed, a dull, gradual blush, "you will need rather to direct the young lady's studies, than to enter on the drudgery of teaching—and I am sure to a well-regulated mind nothing could be more delightful. I shall expect you to read with Miss Fendie, to direct her to those subjects which most call for a lady's attention; to attend to her deport-

ment and carriage, to superintend her work, to see that her wardrobe is kept in proper order, and that she does not get slovenly in her dress; besides—"

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed Victoria, "yonder's old Mr. Graeme of Mossgray riding along the avenue;—what will he want, I wonder? oh goodness, mamma, isn't it strange? let me go to see."

"Old Mr. Graeme of Mossgray!" exclaimed Mrs. Fendie, rising; "be quiet, Victoria, how dare you interrupt me? A very strange visitor certainly;—you have not seen him since your marriage, Charlotte:—perhaps he has heard you are here, and intends to be like other people, for once in his life."

Mrs. Heavieliegh lifted her eyelids with some apparent difficulty and looked a little ashamed; to tell the truth, she had been

dozing during her mother's *preche*, and did not at all know what this commotion was about. Mrs. Fendie's address was broken short, but Hope perceived Lilias Maxwell still trembling in her chair.

There was a deep bow-window in the end of the room; the new governess, unnoticed in the little bustle of interest, with which the Fendie family awaited their unusual visitor, stole by degrees into its recess. Hope Oswald followed her; it was scarcely quiet delicate perhaps; but Hope was anxious to express something of her sympathy.

Lilias leaned upon the window — she shook so much that she needed it—and the sympathetic girl beside her, saw how thin and transparent the long white fingers were, which tremblingly supported her brow. "If you please, Miss Maxwell," said Hope compassionately, "I am afraid you are not well;

and I wish my mother, were only here, for she would know—and, Miss Maxwell, if you please, do not look so sad."

The stranger could not bear this; she turned her head away, and shrank further into the shadow of the curtains, and pressed her thin white fingers upon her eyes; but the tears would be restrained no longer, and Hope hastily placed herself in front of the window, that no eyes but her own might perceive the agony of silent weeping, which the unfriended, solitary girl could not control. She had borne as she best could, the foolish levity and inconsiderate rudeness of the children, and half bewildered with the long stretch of endurance, had silently suffered the chill unpitying lectures of Mrs. Fendie, but the first touch of kindness made the full cup overflow. All the simple philosophies with which Lilias had tried to subdue the natural

strength of her feelings, could not make her grief less green and recent; and Hope stood reverently by, in silence, while the tears poured down like rain, and the shadowy figure before her shook with suppressed sobs. The child Hope had become the benefactor of the orphan, for there was healing in those tears.

CHAPTER VIII.

Amang the fremd I had wandered lang,
Heavy was my heart, and sad my sang;
Ae green sod covered a' my kin,
There were storms without, and nae hope within,
When through the mist a sun-glint came,
And I heard a voice, and it aye said hame—
Hame, oh hame! is there rest for me
But an' aneath the green willow tree?

BALLAD.

THE Laird of Mossgray greeted Mrs. Fendie and her daughter with his usual old-fashioned, graceful politeness; there was something courtly in the gentle bearing of

the recluse old man—and said some kindly words of recognition to all the younger personages present, except Hope, who to the great amazement of the little Fendies, continued steadily before the bow-window, and did not turn round to receive the salutations of Mossgray. Only a very few ordinary observations had been exchanged, when the old man explained his errand.

"I have been seeking a young friend of mine in Cumberland," said Mossgray in a voice whose tone of serene kindness thrilled on the ear of Lilias Maxwell, like some familiar music, stilling her tears; "and I have some idea, Mrs. Fendie, that your kindness could assist me in my search. I have just returned—"

Hope Oswald left her place by the window, and as Mossgray's eye wandered there, he suddenly stopped and started from

his seat. Drawing back, shivering and half afraid, Lilias looked at him, with tears trembling on her long eye-lash, and her white, transparent hand shading her eyes. She was conscious of the presence of no other but himself for the moment, and the strange contradiction of her look, which seemed half to appeal to him for protection, and half to shrink from his scrutiny, confirmed the old man in the sudden idea that this was his ward. Any resemblance that she had to her mother was merely the indefinite and shadowy one, which throws its strange link of kindred over faces which in form and expression are not alike; but he could recognise the daughter of Lilias Johnstone better in the pale, solitary orphan girl before him, than if she had borne her mother's blooming face, or seemed as full of elastic youth and life as she did, when he

saw her last. They stood looking at each other for a moment, and then Mossgray advanced extending his hands.

"Lilias—Lilias Maxwell—that is your name?—and was it the dead, or was it me, whom you distrusted, when you fled from the guardian your mother committed you to?—This was ill-done, Lilias; but you have had weeping and sorrow enough, my poor child, and now you must come home."

Come home!—was there still such a word for the orphan?

She could not realize it; she sat down passively on the chair Hope Oswald brought her, and spite of the large tears which fell silently now and then, continued to fix her sorrowful eyes upon her mother's friend. The strange stupor she was in, alarmed them all at last.

"Lilias—Lilias,"—repeated Mossgray as

he gently held her hand; but Lilias did not speak. She had been denied the natural due and right of grief; she had been hurried away from her mother's grave, almost before her desolate heart had been able to shed tears; and now the outraged nature asserted itself:—the strained strength gave way.

At last the weeping came again in a flood, and Lilias awoke; awoke to hear gentle tongues of women who had only cold words to say to her before; and gentlest of all, the old man's voice, like some kind sound which she had heard in dreams, and waking, yearned to hear again. And the burden of its speech was ever home; it came upon her ear again and again indistinct in every accent but that—what preceded and what followed, was lost to her bewildered sense, but the one word rang clearly through the mist that enveloped her—she was to come home.

And so she did: Hope Oswald wrapped her humble shawl about her, and Mrs. Fendie, with her strangely changed voice accompanied her to the door, and there supported by Mossgray, she entered the carriage which had been sent for, and was driven from the door, the old man sitting by her side. Lilias could scarcely convince herself, until she had entered the room at Mossgray called her own, that it was not all a dream.

The room had been prepared and ready for many days waiting for its stranger guest. A little fire burned in the grate, and gave the look of welcome, which the familiar living, kindly light does give at all times; and through the small, clear panes of the window, the April sun shone in, in the gentle joy of spring. The panelled walls were painted a sombre quiet colour, but here and there were hung small pictures in deep

rich, old-fashioned frames—pictures of such pure faces, saints and angels, as seem now and then to have looked in upon the dreaming sense of olden artists—not all gentle or serene, or at rest, but speaking the common language of humanity; the constantly varying tongue, in whose very weakness, of change and tremulous expression, lies its might and charm.

Some books were arranged upon an old cabinet; books which are everywhere familiar, the friends of all who are able for such fellowship; and some too, less universally appreciated which were yet worthy of their place. But Lilias did not then perceive these particulars of her guardian's delicate care for her. She sat down beside the window, and looked about in a dream.

Before her lay the water, and its peaceful banks, with the charm of youth upon them;

beyond were scattered houses with the home-like wealth of cultivated land around, the dwellings of those who, working with honest hands, brought seed and bread out of the soil, as God did prosper them. At her right hand the grey mass of the old warlike tower rose up against the quiet sky, with the moss of peace upon its embattled walls. Lilias had known all her life the fortunes of the poor—had wandered hither and thither with her mother, following the devious track of the weak father, who pursued without ceasing the fortune he had not firmness to wait, or strength to work for; so that in many fair places where they had been, the solitary woman and grave girl had longed to find a home and abiding place, but had been able never. The hunted fortune fled always further away, and the querulous, feeble nature, complaining with fretful selfishness of his

own ill-fate, seemed always constrained to follow. Strangers and vagabonds they had been continually, and after the brief repose of the widow and her child in the lonely Cumberland glen, Lilias had felt, when she was hurried away in her earliest agony, that thus it was to be for ever.

But now the atmosphere of home descended about her. Only the natural successions of time, one generation going and another coming, had changed the inmates of these walls. Steadily here upon its native ground, the old house stood like a stately oak, which had shed its acorns there, autumn after autumn, before human eye was near to see, and should remain until the end. We do not think distinct thoughts at times which form the crises of our life, and Lilias did not deliberately reflect on this; but it struck strongly upon her through the mist of sorrow

and wonder she was in. This house, whose wealth was of the soil below and the firmament above, whose inheritance was not of silver or of gold, unproductive and barren, but of the fertile land, and the sunshine and the rain of God; this was her home.

But sorrow had broken in her case the elastic nature of youth. Had she remained among strangers, her stay must soon have had a not unusual end; she would have endured for a while, and then have somewhere withdrawn herself to die as her mother died, but bitterer to die alone. As it was, Mossgray gained his ward only in time to save her; and all the summer through Lilias had to be tended like a delicate flower. Vainly she exerted herself and tried to be strong; vainly endeavoured to lessen the anxious cares of her guardian; but it would not do. The springs of youthful strength

were stemmed in her worn-out heart. For a few days she had been able convulsively to bind, and keep her natural sorrow down; but the reaction was vehement and long.

The lilies daily placed upon her table, the books of all pleasant kinds which he constantly brought to her, the visitors whom, after a month or two had elapsed, he tolerated, and indeed encouraged, for her sake—all the gentle things the old man did, day by day, and hour by hour, conspired to invigorate the broken mind of Lilias, and restore its tone and power. She knew that he too grieved for the dead, and she felt that it became her to render him some other return for his tenderness to herself than those pale looks and tears; so conscientiously and painfully she struggled to regain the cheerfulness becoming her years. It was a hard task, for Lilias had not the elastic vitality

which springs up in renewed vigour from the prostration of grief—her nature had much of pensive calm in it; but she struggled against her overwhelming sorrow, and the very effort helped her to overcome.

Mrs. Oswald visited her in kindly friendship, and Mrs. Fendie came to patronize, and suggest, and arrange. Mrs. Fendie did not see how Miss Maxwell could remain, unless Mr. Graeme got some "experienced person," some presiding matron to make his house a proper residence for his ward. Adam Graeme of Mossgray was sixty; he thought the countryside had known him long enough and well enough to trust the daughter of Lilias Johnstone in his hands, as confidently as though he had been her father; and Mrs. Oswald agreed with him.

And Lilias had at once secured the very warm friendship of Hope, who already

meditated making use of her in her grand scheme for the elevation of Helen Buchanan, and the conversion of her father. To make Miss Maxwell intimate with Helen, Hope decided in her very grave and elaborate deliberations over the whole difficult question of her father's resolution and the means to overcome it, would be a great step in advance, but it was decidedly impracticable at present; so Hope, like a wise general, prepared the way with each by praising the other, and suspended more practical operations.

Slowly the faint colour which was natural to her, began to dawn upon the white cheeks of Mossgray's Lilias. The old man's study in the tower was almost deserted; the small projecting turret with its windowed roof and wondrous telescope began to look forlorn and melancholy; the large low room within lay whole days in gloomy silence; the famous

chemic tools of which the children of Fendie had heard thrilling whispers, were gathering a gentle coat of dust. Their owner had experiments to make of a kind more curious than those in which he used them. He was discovering one by one the qualities of the human heart so strangely given in charge to him—was discerning star after star rise upon her firmament—patience, faith, hope—kindly human hope, which has somewhat in this very world beside its riches in the world to come.

One autumn evening (for the summer was over before Lilias recovered her strength) they went out together to the river side. He was telling her how it had been his fellow and companion all his days.

"There is something human in this running water," said the old man. "So we go on, Lilias, through our different stages,

blind to what is to come next, often unconscious of the pleasant places we travel through; but though we chafe sometimes, and seem to pause and delay, how constantly the stream runs on! I like it for its humanity—for all the light, and all the darkness, and the winds that touch, and the rains that flood it—for its beginning and for its end. It pleases me to give it life and utterance, and think it human like myself."

"You knew it when you were young, Mossgray," said Lilias, "and it is beside you still."

She still felt this as something strangely gladdening; to dwell in one place a lifetime; to appropriate it all; to have friendships with its hills and its rivers; to feel that it was home.

"Yes," said Mossgray, looking back at his old house as it lay in the shade, from

which the slanting light of the western sun had nearly passed away, "yes, it is a happiness—it is a pleasant thread, this river, on which to hang the memories of one's life; there was no water, Lilias, in your Cumberland glen?"

"Only a brook," was the answer, "and we used to sit and watch it, for its way was too steep to follow—and sometimes—"

Ah, that climbing sorrow! how it returned and returned again!

"But you have travelled," said Mossgray, gently leading her from this painful recollection; "you have scarcely gone so far as I have, but you have seen many places:—let me hear of your wanderings, Lilias."

"Have you been far away, Mossgray?"

"Very far," said Mossgray, with a mournful smile, "and my furthest journey was a very sad one; I went to seek a dear

friend, and I found him not—that was in India."

"In India!" A flush of sudden light came over the face which turned to him so earnestly.

"Yes. Are you interested in that great world, Lilias?"

"It must be a very great country indeed," said Lilias, slowly, "where the principal places are so far apart. Will you tell me where you were, Mossgray?"

The old man smiled.

"I could have told you long since, had I known you cared for such a subject. I was in Bombay, Lilias, and far into the interior beyond Bombay."

"In Bombay!" There was another flush of interest—the tall slight figure had never looked so life-like, nor the form so animated.

"Yes, in Bombay—do you know anything of Bombay, Lilias?"

"No, no," said Lilias, with a sudden blush, "I do not know—but I have heard—we had a friend once who went there."

She cast a sidelong, tremulous look upward to his face. He did not smile as she feared he would. It pleased him to hear of the friend, and the tone in which the friend was mentioned pleased him. He was glad there was some one in the world, the name of whose habitation had power to move the slumbering fountain of young life within her; he was glad that in this present world she had some other tie than the new relationship which bound her to himself, and in his delicate kindness he looked and spoke gravely, to encourage her to confide in him.

"And you would like me to tell you about it. Would not reading do as well?"

"No, no," repeated Lilias; "the book does not live—you do not see the eyes which saw those things you want to hear of, as I see yours, Mossgray, and—the place is fine, is it not?"

"I think so," was the answer; "yes, I remember that; but, Lilias, when I was there, I was sick at heart—sick with anxiety at first—and sick when I came away, with hope deferred—I should say with hope extinguished. The calamity that maketh the heart sick, clouds a fair landscape sadly, Lilias, and when I think of that beautiful eastern country, I think of it as the grave of my friend."

"Did he die?" asked Lilias, in the tremulous low voice, which for the few preceding moments had been changed.

Mossgray paused. Thirty years had elapsed since colder men decided Hew Murray's fate thirty years without a sign

or token, the faintest that hope could build on; and yet the old man hesitated to say he died.

"Lilias, I cannot tell. He was my dear friend; we were close brethren in our youth, do you think he can have lived these thirty years, and given no sign?"

"No, Mossgray," said Lilias, "oh, no, no! I do not think it can be hard to die; but to live while your dearest friends think you are dead—no, no—it could not be!"

The old man sighed.

"Then he is dead," he said.

There was a pause.

"And this friend of yours," resumed Mossgray, at last; "he likes Bombay, Lilias?"

The light came again more timidly.

"I think so—I mean, he does not *like* it —it is not home—but—"

"But he thinks he will prosper there, and

he is young, and has good cause for his toil?"

Lilias looked at her guardian shyly again; but there was no ghost of raillery on the kind face of Mossgray; he would have her think cheerily of the young hopes of the labourer over the sea.

And Lilias looked away far into the distant air, and answered with a voice so full and rich in its low music, that Mossgray scarcely knew it for hers:

"And for his mother's sake."

CHAPTER IX.

"She is like that harp the winds do play upon; mark her well. She shall tell you what she dreams unwittingly, for her face is no mask—nothing but a veil, and under it you shall see her heart beat."

OLD PLAY.

HELEN BUCHANAN stood alone at the gate of her mother's garden; there was a nervous tremor about her as she leaned upon the hawthorn-hedge, with her face towards the setting sun. These October nights were becoming chill, and the shawl she drew round

her was not a warm one; but her trembling sprung from quite another cause. She was young and proud and poor; and William Oswald, walking as if for a wager, and looking almost as nervously firm as she did, had newly left the gate.

He had been telling her something which to him seemed perfectly reasonable, something which certainly in the abstract did not look unreasonable in any view: that he, a man, able to exercise judgment for himself, and able honourably to earn his own bread, did not feel himself bound by the decision of his father, did not feel by any means that his father's iron will should or could restrain him in those early, strong, energetic years of his manhood; that honouring his father as a father should be honoured, he yet felt some individual rights, which no man could exercise for him. So far was well

enough; the daughter of Walter Buchanan drew up her elastic figure, and strengthening herself in nervous stillness waited for what she knew would follow.

It came in a flood—bold, and grave, and decided as William Oswald always was, when his reserve was broken through. The world was all before them where to choose, and Helen felt that when he spoke of independent labour for which he was strong and able, and of success to be won by that, he spoke the truth, and for a moment the hereditary pride ebbed, and her heart rose to the congenial struggle; but it could not be. Before half the words of her answer were spoken, he had learned it all from the unmistakeable language of her face. "Never, unless received in honour and good-will, with the respect and tenderness which became a daughter. Never!"

They had parted—not in anger, but with some degree of excitement and pain—each with a stronger resolution to overcome the other, each only the more determined to persevere and win. The matter had become a single-handed combat, the combatants were well matched; the issue doubtful; time and the hour could alone decide.

And still, that nervous thrill passing over her like wind, Helen stood at the gate looking towards the west. With one of those sudden changes to which her temperament is liable, a flood of bitter thoughts had suddenly stolen into her mind. It was not envious repining, it was scarcely discontent; but she began to remember that there in her youth she stood alone—that the very strength which she had to earn bread for herself and her mother, by her own honourable labour, had cast her down

in the small society about them, to a lower and to a solitary place—that those bright youthful days to others so instinct with joyous life, were to her days of gloomy labour, evenings of solitude. And thronging in the rear of these, were hosts of indefinite, rapid, inexpressible feelings; remembrances of petty slights and proud swellings of the wounded heart, which in spite of its years of independent working, was still but a girl's. The deep melancholy and depression peculiar to her nature—peculiar only in transient fits, soon swept away by the inherent strength of life and hope within—lowered over her like a cloud. There came to her eyes involuntary causeless tears: her heart grew blank and dark within her, and wistfully she looked upward to the sky—the wonderful western sky with its flushed clouds of sunset —thinking in her sad, proud loneliness

that only this was left to her of the natural gladnesses of youth.

Just then an eager hand was thrust into hers, and the joyous voice of Hope Oswald broke in upon her reverie.

"Helen, Helen, what makes you always stand here and look at the sun?"

The momentary distemper tinged even her speech.

"Because I like to see him sink, Hope. I like to watch him gliding away yonder behind the hill, and see how blank and cold it all looks after he is gone."

"Ay! but, Helen, look how beautiful the clouds are," said Hope, "you would think the sun was hiding yonder. See, see! how grand it is!—and him away all the time beyond the hill. You will not look, Helen: but *I* think the clouds are as beautiful as the sun."

"And in half an hour they will all have melted away," said the young moralizer, "and so does everything in the world that is beautiful, Hope. The fair colours fade into that pale, blank grey, and the air grows chill and mournful, and then comes the night."

"But do you not like the night, Helen?" asked the wondering Hope.

"I was not thinking of the night, I was thinking of what comes upon us in the world," said Helen dreamily in her self-communion, "and how the dull colourless sky droops over us, and the light passes away, and the inexorable darkness comes."

She paused—she was fairly afloat on this dark stream of thought, becoming sadder and more downcast with every word she spoke. The causeless tears hung upon her eye-lashes, her lips quivered and faltered; the deep

cloud of characteristic melancholy had fallen like a veil upon her heart.

"But Helen," said Hope, in a low alarmed voice, as she pressed close to her friend's side. "Helen, is that true? People say it in books, and ministers say it. It is in the Bible I heard one say, but *I* never saw it in the Bible, Helen."

"Saw what?"

"What the minister said—what you were saying, Helen—that the world is very miserable, that every body must be unhappy. Helen, you are old, you know better than me; but I think it is not true."

The electric touch was given; there needed no more; bravely upon the rising tide the distempered thoughts went out, not to return again until their time. The tears went back to their fountain—the face brightened with its varying, fluttering colour—the dark mood was gone.

"Did I say so, Hope? did you think I said so? No, no, it is not true!" said Helen, the words coming quick and low, in her rapid revulsion of feeling; "there is sorrow and there is joy, as there are darkness and light; but the night is good as well as the day, and it is blessed to live—blessed to have all the changes God sends to us—good and evil—the sweet and the bitter—blessed and not miserable, Hope."

The clouds were hovering over the blank hill far away in golden masses, rounded with the soft advancing gloom of night, and overhead was the peaceful sky, pure and pale in the stillness of its rest.

"Sometimes we have storms, Hope," said the repentant Helen, "and sometimes it is dark—dark—you do not know how dark it grows sometimes; but the sun rises every morning, and every night—look up yonder,

how quiet the sky is—do you think the world could be miserable, Hope, so long as there is the sky and the sun?"

Hope looked up wistfully but did not speak, for she could not quite understand yet, either the melancholy itself or the sudden change; but she hung upon Helen's arm in her affectionate girlish way, and they stood together in silence watching how the colours faded one by one, till the hill in the west grew only a great dark shadow, and parting into long pale misty streaks, the clouds lay motionless upon the calm, cold heaven. There is a long stretch of wet sand yonder where the broad Firth ought to be, and something chill and disconsolate speaking of early winter, is in that gusty inconsistent breeze, which already carries past them a yellow leaf or two, dead so soon; but Helen Buchanan, wayward and inconsistent too,

has bright life in her eyes, and sees nothing sad in all she looks upon. Within herself has risen this wilful, strong, capricious light proper to her nature—a nature strangely formed as God builds not as man does—with every delicate line and shadowy curve, belonging separately to the gentle weak, conspiring to perfect it as strong.

Mrs. Buchanan was a cheerful sanguine woman; she liked to have her little parlour look bright after its homely fashion, though not with tawdry embellishments, or those poor ornamental shifts of poverty with which women dwelling at home are apt to solace their vacant hours, and imitate the costly follies of their richer sisters. A little bright fire burned in the grate, not without a certain aroma which whispered of the fragrant *peat*, that helped to compose it; and the parlour with only its one candle was full of cheerful

light. The gentle, kindly mother was jealous of the varying moods of her sole child, and was fain to use all simple arts to throw the spell of quiet cheerfulness over the room in which they spent these long evenings almost constantly alone.

"Mrs. Buchanan," said Hope, "Helen is sad—I want you to tell me why everybody in Fendie is sad; they never used to be before—it is only this year."

Mrs. Buchanan had already read her daughter's face; but she saw that the cloud, if there had been a cloud, was gone, and that it was not expedient to speak of it.

"If you will tell me, Hope my dear," said Helen's good mother, "who everybody is, I shall answer your question; but I am very sure I saw a great number of people in Fendie to-day, who had no sadness about them."

"Oh, but who were they, Mrs. Buchanan?" asked Hope.

Mrs Buchanan smiled.

"There was Robert Johnston, the grocer; he got another daughter last night; and there was Maxwell Dickson at the library—his son Robbie got a prize yesterday at the academy; and there was—"

Hope was disdainful: and even the face of her friend Helen, glowed into genial laughter, as she threw back her unruly hair and interrupted Mrs. Buchanan in great impatience.

"But I did not mean them! I was not thinking of *them*. Maxwell Dickson! as if he knew what it was to be sad—and that great lout Robbie; but I don't care about them—it's our own folk—it's—"

"When do you go back to Edinburgh?" interrupted Helen.

"Oh, next month," was the answer, "my mother says I may stay till Hallowe'en; but, Helen, my mother is going to ask Miss Swinton to come with me to Fendie next summer, at the vacation."

"You seem to be very fond of Miss Swinton, Hope?" said Mrs. Buchanan.

"Oh, yes, everybody is—you would like her too, Mrs. Buchanan."

"Should I? and why do you think that, Hope?"

"Oh, I know," said Hope in wise certainty, "because she likes Helen."

The argument was irresistible, and Mrs. Buchanan confessed it, by pulling Hope's exuberant hair.

"Likes me!" the varying colour heightened on Helen's face. "She does not know me, Hope."

"Yes, but she does, Helen," answered the

sagacious Hope, "for I used to tell her; and she knows you quite well, and she says you are brave. Helen, if you only saw Miss Swinton! but you will when she comes."

"She says I am brave;" Helen repeated the consolatory words under her breath, and asked herself "why?"

"But I do not know, my dear," said Mrs. Buchanan, "how Helen is to see this friend of yours, unless she calls on us—and we are strangers to her, you know."

Mrs. Buchanan was a little proud—she had no idea of being condescended to.

"Only wait till she comes," said Hope triumphantly, "I know she will want to see Helen sooner than anybody else, because she says Helen is—"

Helen interposed. She fancied that Hope intended to repeat the same word of commendation, and the quick spirit did not

choose to hear it again. She was mistaken—Hope intended to bestow upon her friend the highest title in her vocabulary—that of gentlewoman—in name of Miss Swinton.

"When Miss Swinton speaks of me so kindly," said Helen in haste, "let me hear what she calls you, Hope."

Hope hesitated—she liked very well to repeat the commendation to herself, but had a little tremor in saying it aloud—if Helen laughed at her!

"I don't know—perhaps she did not mean it," said Hope slowly, "but Miss Swinton says I am sensible, Helen."

Mrs. Buchanan shed the rebellious hair off Hope's open candid forehead, and Helen laughed in such kindly wise, as could by no possibility mean ridicule, as her mother said:

"And so you are, Hope—and a good bairn besides. Miss Swinton is quite right."

Whereupon Hope launched forth into another panegyric upon Miss Swinton. Helen did not very distinctly hear her. There was a good deal of the suggestive in Hope's conversation, and her friend had snatched from it in her hasty fashion the germ of an important idéa.

"Mother," said Helen, breaking in abruptly upon Hope, "should you like to live in Edinburgh."

Mrs. Buchanan's mind was not so rapid as her daughter's. She looked up with a quiet unmoved smile.

"I do not doubt I should, Helen; most people like Edinburgh; but why do you ask me?"

Mrs. Buchanan laid down her work as she spoke, and waited for the proposal which she knew was to follow. She had yet no glimmering of what it was, but she had

studied those kindling eyes too long, not to know that the sudden flush of some new purpose possessed them.

"Suppose we could go," said Helen rapidly, "suppose I could get a situation, mother, with some one like Miss Swinton, with Miss Swinton herself perhaps; should you like it? would you go to Edinburgh?"

Mrs. Buchanan paused to think; the glowing moving face before her was not of the kind which takes time to deliberate. Helen clasped her small nervous fingers and looked into the vacant air, with her fixed unconscious eyes, and saw no obstacle in the way; no lingering tendernesses to subdue; no sickness of heart to overcome; when they came hereafter she would do battle against them bravely—now, she saw them not.

"Oh, Helen!" exclaimed Hope, breathless

with her first surprise and delight; but Hope recollected herself; this would be a death-blow to all her schemes, so she added: "Helen, the teachers all live with Miss Swinton. Mrs. Buchanan, you would not like to be alone?"

Mrs. Buchanan still said nothing. It was very true she would not like to be alone, and very true, it was also, that she shrank from the unknown evils of change, and was better pleased to remain with the quiet cares she knew, than encounter those she did not know; but unlike Hope, she said nothing. She did not choose to throw down, by any sudden decision, the dreams with which her daughter was already filling the air.

"Do you think I would not do for Miss Swinton, Hope?" asked Helen.

"Helen!" exclaimed Hope indignantly.

"Well then, why do you say that?"

"Because," and Hope tried to put wise meanings into her own girlish open face, and to make it as eloquent as Helen's; "because, Helen, I should not like you to go away from Fendie. Oh! no, no, you must stay always at home."

And as Helen lifted her flushed face, the elaborate look of Hope, and her mother's anxious glance fell upon her together. They only made the blood rush more warmly about her heart. She started with a rapid nervous impulse: "Mother, if you do not disapprove, let me write to Miss Swinton to-morrow."

Poor Hope Oswald! she had been *too* sensible—she had defeated her own well-digested, painfully constructed plan. Miss Swinton instead of a powerful auxiliary threatened to become the most hopeless barrier in her way, and Hope was almost in despair. She began immediately to belie

Edinburgh; to manufacture grievances; and to represent how very hard, especially for the teachers, was the laborious life at school; but Helen's fixed dreamy, unconscious face warned her it was all lost, and very disconsolately she said good-night.

"My father would be pleased enough if it was Miss Maxwell," thought Hope with some disdain as she went home, "all because Mr. Graeme will leave her Mossgray. I wish somebody would give Helen a place like Mossgray—but I don't either—because Helen is better than we are, though she is poor. Who's that?"

Hope's reverie concluded very abruptly—who was it?

Alas, it was the interesting, sentimental, young minister newly placed in the church of Fendie, whom all the town delighted to honour. He did not see her as he went

steadily down the dim road, and the dismayed Hope stood still to watch him, with prophetic terror. Yes, indeed, it is Mrs. Buchanan's gate he stops at; and now the door is opened, and a flash of warm light shines for a moment into the garden, and the Reverend Robert Insches is admitted. Burning with suppressed anger, the jealous Hope hurried home, eager to defy and defeat her father, and utterly to destroy any presumptuous hopes which the Reverend Robert Insches might entertain in regard to Helen Buchanan.

CHAPTER X.

The morning rises dimly,
There are clouds and there is rain,
But always the sun is there—
So softly breaking, parting, like the mists
About the hills, the dismayed sorrow looses
Her heavy veil and cloak of mourning from her,
And sometimes smiling, sometimes weeping, like
The skies in April, lifts her head again,
And looks upon the light.

"MISS MAXWELL," said Hope Oswald as she sat on a low chair by the side of Lilias on the morning of Hallowe'en, the last day she was to spend at home: "you have

never seen Helen Buchanan yet;—I should like so much to let you see her before I go away."

"And you are going away to-morrow, Hope?" said Lilias.

"Yes," said Hope disconsolately; "my father is to take me to-morrow. I should be so glad, Miss Maxwell, if you only knew Helen."

"Well, Hope," said Lilias, "you must contrive to introduce us to each other to-night. I see no other way of accomplishing it."

"But, Miss Maxwell," said Hope with some confusion: "Helen will not be at our house to-night:—she never comes to our house—she always stays at home."

"And why does she always stay at home?"

Hope's face flushed indignantly.

"Because she has to keep a school—not a school for young ladies—and because she is proud, and other people are foolish and do not know what it is to be a gentlewoman;—and because my father—"

Hope paused, perceiving that it might not be necessary to publish the faults of her father. At the same time Hope was very anxious to make Lilias useful in her absence as a means of proclaiming the excellencies of Helen; and there was yet another thing which Hope desired to make Lilias understand; that William was by no means an eligible *parti*, whatever his father or Mossgray might say to the contrary. Hope had never heard yet of the mysterious Indian letters, and did not know that Lilias was as completely fortified against the attractions of William as he was from hers.

"Because she keeps a school, and because

she is proud," repeated Lilias; "but she has been here in Fendie, all her life—and she must have friends."

"Oh, yes," answered Hope promptly, "she has plenty of friends; only you know, Miss Maxwell, nobody she cares about—I don't mean that either—I mean there is nobody like herself—I never saw any one like Helen but you."

"And am I like Helen?"

Hope looked up at the calm, pensive face before her with its fair still features, and faint colour, and thoughtful, melancholy eyes—and confessed to herself that it was not so.

"No—I don't mean you are like in the face—only—" Hope paused and was puzzled, "only you are Helen's age—and you are alone—and—you are a gentlewoman."

Lilias smiled.

"Thank you, Hope, for your good

opinion; but perhaps if Miss Buchanan is so proud she would not like me to call on her."

"Oh, would you go?" exclaimed Hope—"Oh, Miss Maxwell, if you would only go! I did not mean that Helen was proud—only she does not care for people who do not care for her."

"Mossgray bids me go out," said Lilias;—she had very soon adopted the kindly territorial name which was at once respectful and familiar, and by which her guardian liked to be called; "and the day is bright—will you take me with you, Hope, and we shall go to see Miss Buchanan?"

Hope was full of delight and thanks.

"But if you come to Fendie now, mind you are not to go back till night;—for you promised to be with us at Hallowe'en—mind, Miss Maxwell."

Miss Maxwell did mind, and gently promised she would remain, though the mirth of the youthful party was scarcely very congenial to her subdued spirits; and when she had equipped herself for her walk, and had received the smiling permission which she asked from Mossgray, and with Hope's hand in hers, was walking down the water-side to Fendie, she resumed the subject:

"And so you think, Hope, that Miss Buchanan could not be induced to meet us to-night?"

Hope looked up with some alarm.

"My mother has not asked her to come. Oh, Miss Maxwell, do you think my father would not be angry if I did?"

Lilias shook her head:—she did not know.

"But to be sure Helen would not come," said Hope ruefully. "Do you know, Miss Maxwell—"

"Do I know what, Hope?"

But Hope still hesitated.

"I mean, Miss Maxwell—if you like Helen—you are sure to like her—at least I think you will—perhaps; if you do like Helen, will you tell my father sometime how good she is—for my father does not know Helen."

Lilias looked at Hope with a smile, and Hope returned the look with a very sagacious, perplexed, deliberative expression upon her fresh, candid face.

"You seem to be very fond of Miss Buchanan, Hope?"

"And so I am," said Hope blythely, "and so is everybody—only—my father does not know Helen."

This anxious affection of Hope's, childish at once, and chivalrous, had a great deal of interest for Lilias, and she was silent now,

her thoughts almost as much occupied about Helen, as were those of Helen's youthful champion.

"Helen will like you, Miss Maxwell," said Hope suddenly. "I know she will; for the people have been saying so much about you since you came."

The colour rose gently on the cheek of Lilias.

"What have they said about me, Hope?"

"Oh, not very much—only that they were sorry you were ill, and thought you would be so solitary at Mossgray. Helen saw you at church, Miss Maxwell, and when the people speak about the strange young lady, she calls you the lily of Mossgray; but I called you—"

"What did you call me, Hope?"

"You will not be angry?—It was only

beeause your name is like the names in the old ballads—I called you the Laird's Lilias."

"So my name reminded you of the Laird's Jock, and the Laird's Wat, did it, Hope?" said Lilias smiling; "but it is an excellent title you give me, for I should have been a very solitary sad Lilias, but for the Laird;—and was Miss Buchanan sorry for me because I was alone?"

"She never said that," said Hope honestly, "because Helen is always alone herself—only she is with her mother."

Lilias walked on silently and put her hand over her eyes: how great a difference did that brief sentence make!

Helen Buchanan's scholars were flocking out when Hope and Lilias reached the house. There was a considerable number of them, from awkward hoydens of Hope's own years, whose shyness their graceful teacher had

mellowed into something not unhandsome, down to little sunburnt fairies of four or five, who, spite of clogs and coarse dresses, had still the unconscious charm of childhood upon them, and needed no mellowing. They all knew Hope, and with her were much more friendly than deferential, for Hope with her buoyant spirits and frank young life could not always be kept within the bounds of the circle of Misses who were proper acquaintances for the Banker's daughter; and most of them had heard of the young lady of Mossgray. Some, touched with reverence for the paleness of Lilias' face saluted her with a shame-faced curtsey; the rest hung back, crowding upon each other in little groups, and looked at her with curiosity only softened by their shyness—for all were shy. The young teacher, like the poet, had a sympathy for "sweet shame-facednesse,"

and thought it sat well upon children; so that she rather cherished than found fault with the native bashfulness of her pupils. People think otherwise in these precocious days; but the little ones in Fendie are happily still shy.

Helen sat in her presiding chair in the school-room with thumbed books and copies, and slates covered with armies of sprawling figures heaped upon the table before her. She was leaning her head upon her hand and looking somewhat wearied; the lessons were over for the day, for the placid work of sewing—a most weary one to the young practitioners—occupied the afternoon. There was a certain mist upon her face, and she sighed. Her sky was rather wayward at this present time, and had various passing shadows; and though her mother had already two or three times called her to the parlour,

Helen still lingered alone—not that she was thinking deeply or painfully; her changeful nature had times which did not think at all, and in the mist of an unconscious reverie, slightly sad, but which a single touch could raise into buoyant exhilaration or depress into melancholy, she sat by the large work-table in the empty school-room leaning her head upon her hand.

"Helen," said Hope Oswald, "this is Miss Maxwell." Hope intended to add something pretty—to say that they were like each other, and should be friends; but it would not do, for Hope too, after her own peculiar fashion was shy; so she withdrew abruptly and left her friends to improve their acquaintance by themselves.

"I am very glad to see you, Miss Maxwell," said Helen earnestly; and then she too stopped and became embarrassed

and looked at the door for her mother—but her mother did not come: and Helen glanced up with admiration and quick liking into the quiet pensive face whose steadiness she could not but envy, and felt her own variable countenance burn as she repeated: "indeed I am very glad to see you."

"You are very kind," said the composed and gentle Lilias, who was less swiftly moved than Helen. "Hope told me you had compassion on my solitude, Miss Buchanan, and encouraged me to ask you to cheer it;—and I had confidence in Hope."

"But you must have no confidence in Hope as regards us," said Helen, recovering herself, "for Hope is my sworn knight and has been my mother's favourite all her life:—will you come and see my mother?"

Mrs. Buchanan was prepared for them by Hope's kind warning, and had little more

than time to remove some small matters of preparation for their simple mid-day meal, from the fire, when the famed young lady of Mossgray entered the parlour with Helen.

And then as Lilias, the motherless, received the cheerful kindly greeting which people call *motherly*, Helen saw that the face of the Lily of Mossgray was not an unexpressive one; that the large dark blue eyes were cast down to hide unshed tears, and that even in the pleasure which Mrs. Buchanan's welcome gave her, the anguish of the solitary and desolate came over the orphan's heart.

They were soon friends—friends so warmly and speedily that Hope Oswald started in glad surprise when Mrs. Buchanan invited Lilias to remain with them, until it should be time for Mrs. Oswald's juvenile Hallowe'en party, and Lilias consented with good-

will. Here was a masterstroke! To have the Lily of Mossgray, at present the admired of all admirers, come direct from the humble house of Helen Buchanan! Hope repeated to herself as she went home the commendation of Miss Swinton, and ventured to believe it true.

"What will my father think?" mused Hope; and she hurried to the office to beg him, as an especial favour, himself to come with her to the grocer's to lay in a stock of nuts for the important transactions of the evening.

"Wait till after dinner, Hope," said the banker graciously; and Hope waited till after dinner; then, when the lights began to shine out one after another in the main street of Fendie—the more dignified shops of Fendie are resplendent in the glories of gas—and Hope was quite sure that her friend

Adelaide would be getting ready to start, and that she herself would scarcely have time to assume the new silk frock which Mrs. Oswald feared could not fail to receive extensive damage this evening, her father at last was ready to accompany her, and they proceeded to make their important purchase.

There was a good deal of the mist of frost in the bracing, pleasant air; but high above the haze was a cold, distinct, full moon. It did not cast down a very clear light however through the veil which hung between the earth and the sky, and the youngsters in the Main Street of Fendie decidedly preferred the shop-windows.

Opposite the important shop of Mr. Elliot Bell, the principal grocer of Fendie, a group of little girls were enjoying themselves in the bright spot illuminated by the lights within. They were performing one of those

childish dramas which look like relics of some early stage not without a certain art in their construction. Who that has had the good fortune to be born a girl in Scotland does not remember the monotonous expectancy of the first act, and the quite startling nature of the last in that famous play of "Janet Jo?" It made rather a pretty scene in the quiet street of Fendie. A pile of packing-cases and empty boxes standing securely in a street innocent of thieves because the premises of the great drapers Messrs. Scott and Armstrong had no room for them, formed the back-ground; demurely arranged in the shelter of these stood a row of little girls; while advancing and retiring before them, was another line of little figures, keeping time to their chant. The light shone pleasantly upon the small, sparkling faces—every Jean and Mary, and

Maggie among them had been already summoned by their respective mothers, but the play was not played out, and the young performers remained at their post. The banker stood at Mr. Elliot Bell's door with his daughter, very graciously pleased and admiring. The other part of the street lay in shadow; the soft, brown haze faintly lighted by the moonbeams hung between them and the serene unclouded sky, and through the mist, the spire of the church at the other end of the street shot strangely up, making its sharp point visible against the clear, blue arch above; and the sweet voices of the children, in their monotonous chant, were in harmony with the time.

The banker was not easily moved by the æsthetics of common life; but the society of his favourite melted his heart.

"Where have these children learned to

move so gracefully, Hope," asked Mr. Oswald in the incautiousness of his gracious mood; "they might have been with the French dancing-master, whom your friend Adelaide speaks so much about."

"The French dancing-master, papa!" exclaimed Hope; "he could not make people graceful. Adelaide Fendie is not graceful; she only knows how to put her feet—"

Mr. Oswald laughed.

"Well then, Hope, what about these little girls—it must be natural to them."

Hope began to tremble as she adventured her first direct experiment.

"I think I know what it is, father."

"Well, Hope?"

"It's because—because they have a gentlewoman to teach them," said the brave Hope with a considerable tremor.

Mr. Oswald looked grave and frowned

he had lost his interest in the children; but his frown only provoked the bold spirit of his favourite daughter who knew her own power.

"They are only common people's children," continued Hope with a good deal of warmth; "but they have a gentlewoman to teach them, papa; and Miss Swinton says that is the way to make people graceful. I am sure it is too—for if you only saw the girls who are not with Helen Buchanan!—because it's not being rich that does any good;—people might have all the money in the world, and only be common people; but Helen Buchanan is a gentlewoman born!"

The banker wisely withdrew into the shop and busying himself about the nuts, pretended not to have noticed the energetic speech which made Hope's cheek burn and her eyes glow in the delivery. Mr. Oswald

was considerably afraid, for he saw that Hope was by no means an antagonist to be despised, and did not well know how to meet her fiery charges. Hope was indifferent about the nuts: she had begun her campaign, and felt all the glow and excitement of her first declaration of war.

In the meantime, Lilias Maxwell had settled down quietly into her corner of Mrs. Buchanan's parlour. The rapid sympathy of Helen had already gathered up the loneliness, the wants and yearnings of the orphan, and all that were in sorrow had an unfailing claim upon the pity and tenderness of her mother. The calm face, so pensive and pale, and thoughtful, and the unquiet face with its constant life and motion contrasted strangely, so near to each other; but their diverse currents of life had yet many points of harmony. Each was the only child of her

mother: each had the self-knowledge which comes in solitude, and as they talked together, each came to recognise thoughts like her own, in a guise and form so different, that strange smiles almost mirthful brightened even the face of Lilias as they grew familiar. The stranger very soon ceased to be a stranger then, for even Mossgray was not so like home.

CHAPTER XI.

The auld guidwife's weelhoordet nits
Are round and round divided,
And monie lads and lasses' fates
Are there that night decided.
Some kindle, couthy, side by side,
An' burn thegither trimly,
Some start awa' wi' saucy pride
An' jump out owre the chimlie
Fu' high that night.

HALLOWE'EN.

THE juvenile party had assembled in Mrs. Oswald's drawing-room. The Fendies of Mount Fendie, the Maxwells of Firthside, the son and daughter of Dr. Elliot, who

rented Greenshaw, and several other scions of rural magnates. Hope had a secret feeling that she would have liked an auxiliary party of Helen Buchanan's scholars in the kitchen, and should have had much better fun with them than among the young ladies and the young gentlemen, with their incipient flirtations and full dress.

The eldest Miss Maxwell of Firthside was eighteen; she sat apart and dignified beside Mrs. Oswald and Lilias on a sofa, thinking William Oswald a great lout, and herself much too important a person to countenance the follies of "the children." Lilias did not think so; but their gay laughter and active sport made her shrink now and then, and by its very contrast recalled her grief.

The banker was very gracious to Lilias. He had some indefinite hope that she might possibly withdraw William from his foolish

fancy. He hoped her walk from Mossgray had not wearied her.

"Oh no," said Lilias, "I have had a long rest. Hope has done me the favour to make a very important addition to my list of Fendie friends to-day."

Hope paused in the midst of the tumult of burning nuts to listen. Her father glanced at her quickly with an eye which presaged a storm. Hope drew herself up and defied it.

"I have been in Mrs. Buchanan's since the morning—do you know her, Mrs. Oswald?"

"Yes, I know her," said Mrs. Oswald, quietly, with secret satisfaction, only less warm than Hope's. "Mrs. Buchanan is an old friend of mine. You liked her, no doubt?"

"Perhaps one must be alone as I have

been," said Lilias, faltering slightly, "before one can know what a pleasure it is—I mean, to be in the atmosphere of a mother; but Hope's Helen, Mrs. Oswald—I wonder I have been here so long, and have not heard of her before."

"That will be the Miss Buchanan that keeps the school," interrupted Miss Maxwell of Firthside.

Lilias smiled.

"If you knew her you would not need that distinction, though it is a very good one; but one runs no risk of losing her, Miss Maxwell, though all the other Miss Buchanans in Scotland were congregated in Fendie."

"Oh, is she so pretty?" asked the young lady, with some curiosity.

William Oswald stood at some distance, leaning upon the mantelpiece. At his feet

little Agnes Elliot looked up, vainly pleading that he would put those two nuts, representing herself and Harry Stewart of Fairholm, into some safe corner of the ruddy fire; but William had no ear for little Agnes.

The banker sat in a great chair near his wife's sofa looking, as he wished it to appear, towards the young merrymakers round the fireplace, and pretending to be extremely indifferent to the conversation, but listening with all his might.

"It is not that she is pretty," said Lilias; "I cannot tell what the charm is—but the charm is great, I know. Hope, you know Miss Buchanan best—tell Miss Maxwell what it is."

"But, Miss Maxwell, I am sure you know better than me," said Hope dubiously, her triumph checked by fear, lest her own powers of description should fail. "I don't

know what it is, except it is just because Helen is a gentlewoman."

Miss Maxwell of Firthside elevated her good-looking small head, with its *nez retroussé*, and looked contemptuous. Mr. Oswald pushed back his chair hastily.

"Hope is very right," said Lilias; "but there are gentlewomen, many of them, to whom nothing could give that singular refinement. It is not conventional grace of manner at all, either; one cannot tell what it is."

"Is that Miss Buchanan? Oh, I know her—I know her!" cried one of the Firthside boys. "She hit me once; but I think I like her for all that."

"Miss Buchanan struck you?" said his sister. "What did she do that for?"

"Oh, I'll tell you, Georgina!" said a smaller youth. "He was hitting Robbie Carlyle's cuddie with his switch—he's a

cuddie himself—he was hitting me just before; and the young lady came up and took the switch from him and loundered him. Oh, didn't he deserve it!"

"She didna lounder me!" cried the first speaker, indignantly, forgetting in his haste that his vernacular should not be spoken before ears polite. "She only hit me once, and laughed, and asked me how I likit it. She never hurt me; and we're good friends now."

"Is that a way to speak, Hector?" cried the young lady-sister, in dismay. "What a vulgar boy you are!"

Hope with difficulty restrained a retort as to the superior elegance of our kindly Scottish tongue, when little Agnes Elliot came running forward with the nuts which William Oswald could not be induced to put into the fire for her.

"This is Harry Stewart, and this is me,"

said the innocent little Agnes, too young yet to have any sort of bashfulness about her juvenile sweetheart, "and if you please, Hope, will you put them in?"

Hope put them in as she was requested, and Hope also placed another couple of nuts in the glowing heat of the fire, and stood watching them with much anxiety. There were a great many eager gazers about the hearth—a great many youthful fates were being determined; but Hope's nuts were still burning merrily when the destiny of all the others had been sealed. "Who is it, Hope? who is it?" cried blythe voices on every side; but Hope closed her lips firmly, and shook her head, and would not tell.

"Oh, I know!" said Hector Maxwell; "it's Hope and me—Hope's burning herself and me!"

Hope's indignant denial was lost in the

general chorus—"Hope's burning herself and Hector Maxwell!" Hope was very much offended; she pushed the joyous Hector away, and scolded little Agnes Elliot; it was too bad; but she still stood perseveringly by the fire, watching the nuts: they were at the most dangerous stage, and there was still the risk of one starting from the side of the other.

The crisis past; lovingly they subsided together into white ashes.

"It's William and Helen, Miss Maxwell," whispered Hope, secretly clapping her hands, and Lilias was prepared for the revelation, and received it with becoming gravity.

All the young faces in the room were red and glowing; they were tired of burning nuts, and Mrs. Oswald's old nurse, Tibbie, was brought in state from the kitchen to superintend and interpret the mysterious process of "dropping the egg."

"Oh, goodness!" cried Victoria Fendie, "look—look! it's a sword and a grand cocked hat—isn't it, Tibbie? and that's for our Adelaide. I wonder what it means."

"A cocked hat!" said Hector Maxwell, indignantly, "it's more like a triangle—the thing the showfolk play tunes on—and a sword! It's the bow of a fiddle."

"Whiskt!" said Tibbie, "it's just a sword; and what should it mean, bairns? just that Miss Adie's to get a grand sodger officer—see if I dinna say true."

Adelaide Fendie blushed her dull blush, and whispered:

"Oh, Hope, do you think she knows?"

"She knows what it looks like," said Hope.

But Adelaide was not satisfied.

"Do you not think she knows more than

that? Oh, Hope, what if it was to come true?"

Hope laughed; but it was her own turn now, to watch the mysterious evolutions of the egg.

"It's a ship! it's a ship!" cried Hector Maxwell, in an ecstacy. "Tibbie, I am sure you meant this for me."

"Never you heed, Maister Hector," said the oracular Tibbie; "it's Miss Hope's; but you're to get her, ye ken, so it's a' ane."

Hope swept away in high disdain from Hector's vicinity.

"Tibbie," she whispered, "try one for a young lady; she is not here, but I like her, and I'll tell you after who she is."

Tibbie obeyed.

"It's like a book," cried Victoria

"It's a letter," said Hector.

"Oh, Tibbie, what does it mean?" inquired the perplexed Hope.

Tibbie was slightly puzzled too; the rules of her simple art gave her no assistance.

"Well, bairns, I canna just tell—wait a minute. Ay, Miss Hope, that's it—the young lady will get her fortune out of a book."

"Out of a book, Tibbie?"

"Deed, ay, Miss Hope; we're no to ken hoo till the time comes but see if she disna get her fortune out of a book."

Hope drew back to cogitate; she could make nothing of this mysterious deliverance of Tibbie's.

By and by, Adam Graeme's old-fashioned, brown-hooded conveyance (all classes of vehicles are called by the generic name, conveyance, in Fendie), driven by "Mossgray's man," Saunders Delvie, arrived to

take Lilias home. Hope accompanied her to the door.

"If you please, Miss Maxwell," said Hope, "will you see Helen sometimes when I am away?"

"Yes, Hope," answered Lilias.

"And, Miss Maxwell, will you just speak of her sometimes before my father—I don't mean *to* my father—but you know what I mean."

"Yes, Hope," repeated Lilias, "I shall do what I can; don't be afraid, and now good-bye."

The carriage drove off, but Hope still lingered at the door, looking down the dim, hazy, quiet street. There were very few passengers, but as she stood looking out, she perceived a certain tall, plaided figure rapidly advancing upon the opposite side, in shadow of the houses. Hope turned and

shut the door in sudden wrath. What could the Reverend Robert Insches have to do at the "townend" on this Hallowe'en night? It looked suspicious; he had been seeing Helen Buchanan!

The next morning early, Hope herself traversed the same road to bid Helen good-bye. The coach started at eleven, and it was only a little after eight when Hope looked in upon Mrs. Buchanan's breakfast-table. Helen looked in excellent spirits; the ring of her pleasant laugh had reached Hope's ear before she opened the parlour-door.

"Do you like Miss Maxwell, Helen?" inquired Hope.

"Very much, Hope," was the quick answer; "we shall be excellent friends."

"Because she likes you, Helen," continued Hope. "If you had only heard her last night, Mrs. Buchanan."

The blood flushed at once over Helen's face. It was not disagreeable to be praised —not even before the Oswalds; but it excited pride as well as curiosity.

"Helen," resumed Hope, "Mr. Insches comes here very often, does he not?" Hope looked immensely jealous.

Helen did not answer; there was some annoyance, and a good deal of mirth upon her face.

"Yes, Hope," said Mrs. Buchanan, sedately, "Mr. Insches is a good lad. He visits far better than any minister that has been in Fendie since I came."

"Ah, but he does not visit everybody else as often as he visits you!" exclaimed the jealous Hope. "Helen, do you like him?"

The merry ring of Helen's laugh did not by any means please Hope this morning.

"Surely," she said; "why should I not like him, Hope?"

"Ah, I don't mean that," said Hope; "but—I am sure you don't *care* for him, Helen?"

Helen blushed again; but her answer was more satisfactory this time.

"No, indeed, Hope; not the very least in the world."

"Mr. Insches is a fine lad," repeated Mrs. Buchanan, significantly.

"Oh yes, so is everybody," said Hope; "but do you know, Mrs. Buchanan, I think he thinks he is good-looking."

"And so he is, Hope."

"But he is a man, and a minister! what right has he to think about such a thing?"

Mrs. Buchanan shook her head, and did not refuse to smile; for men and ministers too have their vanities.

"Helen," said Hope, "I made our Tibbie try your fortune last night, and what do you think it was? We could not make it out at first, but Tibbie said it was a book; and you're to get your fortune out of a book. Now, mind, and we'll just see what happens —and, Helen, I burnt you."

The unquiet face grew suddenly grave, and flushed over cheek and brow with the hot blush of pride; the tone changed in a moment.

"Did you, Hope? you were very cruel."

"Oh, but you know that's not what I mean!" said Hope; "and, Helen, you need not be angry at me."

"Who did you burn with Helen, Hope?" said Mrs. Buchanan.

Hope dared not answer; and yet there was some curiosity in the kindled indignation of that strangely moving face.

"It is time for me to go away," said Hope, disconsolately. "Good-bye, Mrs. Buchanan; and, Helen, you need not be angry when I am just going away."

Helen rose and accompanied her favourite to the door.

"I am not angry, Hope; but you must never speak of me again at home; mind—or I shall be very much offended."

"Why?" said Hope, boldly.

But it was not quite so easy to answer why.

"Because I shall promise if you will tell me the reason," said the sensible Hope.

But Helen could give no reason; so she bit her lip and looked half angry, and laughed.

"Do you know, Hope, I begin to think you are to be very clever," she said at last.

"Miss Swinton says I am sensible," said Hope, steadily; "and when you have no reason, why should you be angry?—but mind you are to get your fortune out of a book; and now I must go away."

The farewell was said, and Hope gone; but Helen still stood leaning over the garden-gate, looking after her with an embarrassed smile upon her face. It was a sunny morning, though the haze of the beginning frost was still in the air; the morning always brought new hopes and a buoyant up-springing to the elastic nature of Helen Buchanan, and she felt more than usually light-hearted to-day. As was her habit, she revealed this in every unconscious movement. Mrs. Buchanan knew by the very measure of her step as she re-entered the house, that there was no mist in her sunny atmosphere —no cloud upon her sky. A certain shy

pleasure hovered upon her face, prompting her to laugh at sundry times with embarrassed uncertain gladness, and swaying about the colour in her cheek, as a mist is swayed by the wind. It did not seem certainly that Hope Oswald had much offended her.

But it was not that; neither was it the evident pleasure which the young minister, who thought himself good-looking, found in Mrs. Buchanan's humble parlour, nor yet the friendship of Lilias Maxwell. The bright nature did indeed in its own warm alembic combine all these together, and draw from them a certain exhilaration; but itself in the involuntary elasticity which was its best inheritance was the source of its own happiness. A race and precious gift, chequered as it was with the infinite variety of shadows, and all the depths of sudden

depression which calmer spirits could not know.

But it was very true that the Reverend Robert Insches had called very many times of late on Mrs. Buchanan, and that Helen talked to him as she would have talked to any indifferent acquaintance, in her own varied wayward fashion, and that the young minister seemed exceedingly glad to respond; whereupon Mrs. Buchanan, in spite of her great favour for William Oswald, began to perceive more clearly the obstacles which stood between Helen and him, and to grow more indignant at his father. His father, the harsh, stern man whose rigid strength had done so much injury to her gentle husband, and who now cast his severe shadow over the lot of her daughter. And William had been long in possession of the field; it

pleased the good mother to see it entered by another competitor, and if ordinary signs held good, a competitor the Reverend Robert Insches was beginning to be.

All this was very true; but very true it was also that Helen was supremely indifferent to the good looks of the youthful minister, and that the Reverend Robert himself had by no means decided whether he had or had not any "intentions" respecting the young schoolmistress of Fendie. She *was* the schoolmistress; to call her by the more ornamental name of teacher or governess would not do; and the Reverend Robert was himself of somewhat plebeian origin, and knew how apt congregations are to scrutinize the pedigree and breeding of a new minister's wife. So he was wise though he was fascinated, and Mrs. Buchanan was a little premature.

But Hope Oswald, on the journey to Edinburgh, contrived to let the banker know how assiduously the minister visited her friend, and had the consolation to perceive that her arrow did not miss its mark. It by no means weakened the resolution which the obstinate man had formed in respect to the daughter of his former friend; but acting upon the suggestive praise of Lilias Maxwell, it gave him a little misgiving about the wisdom of his unalterable decision. It was humiliating to make a mistake; but the very possibility made him cling more closely to his obstinate resolve. He would never receive Walter Buchanan's daughter—never! He had fulminated his sentence on the matter once, and it was decided as the Medes and Persians decide—beyond the power of change.

CHAPTER XII.

I would not have a speck rest on his fame
Not if it gave me kingdoms—
'Tis very true that I am poor and friendless,
But think you for that reason I would steal
Kinsman and lands from yet another orphan?
No, no—ah, no!

LILIAS MAXWELL sat in the old-fashioned window-seat of the Mossgray drawing-room busy with some household sewing. It was an appropriate work then, with its licence of unlimited thought, though it had often been unwholesome enough for the solitary orphan.

She was looking forward now, in that freshness of feeling with which, those look who after a long interregnum of pain, may again dare to turn their eyes to the future. Her heart was convalescent, and the haze of subdued sadness which remained about her present self made the prospect only the fairer. She was thinking of her guardian's delicate care of her, and of the one living voice which should yet thank him for his tenderness.

The old man upstairs in his study was reading one of his philosophical favourites with some restlessness, as a duty. He was slightly ashamed of himself for so much preferring the society of his young charge to that of his old, learned, constant friends. The dust that lay upon his scientific tools and the unusual order and solemn regularity with which these folio and quarto inhabitants of his shelves were arranged, came upon him

like a reproof. His hand rested upon the fanciful records of Bishop Berkeley's mystic system. Open before him lay the steadier disquisitions of a grave philosopher of Scotland. Upon the same table were some of those strange, wild charts which reveal to us the dreamy sea of German thought. The volumes round bore all on kindred subjects—writings of men who had given consistence to the reveries of the unformed world before their time, and of men who had but skill enough to spin their spider's thread about the obscure college or unknown scholar's cell in which they lived and died. Divine philosophy in its strength and its weakness encircled the Laird of Mossgray.

But from the high window of the projecting turret the ruddy winter sunshine stole in a line of dazzling light through the large low room. It was a mild day, so mild that

the turret window was open, and the low hum of rural sounds ascended from beneath. Adam Graeme leant back in his chair, and looked at the steady line of sunlight, and forgot the philosophies of science. There rose in the gentle soul of the old man, philosophies of older date than these, born before ever the restless mind of humanity, had investigated its own formation or classified its feelings.

"The same sound is in mine ears
Which in those days I heard."

Wonderful sights and sounds of nature unchangeable in all their varying—wonderful human heart which twines its memories about them, and growing old, dwells in the past, by aid of the great earth and greater sun!

By the fireside stood an old carved chair;

the room was so much the hermitage of its owner, that its furniture was very scanty; there was no accommodation for any companionship; but when every other article in the room was piled with books, this solitary chair remained always unencumbered. For years it had stood in the same position, turned towards the fire, its high carved back standing up, a kind of gloomy screen against the light. This day, its position had been slightly altered, and the sunshine streaming in, threw its fantastic gilding over the antique carving and faded old embroidery of the unused seat. The old man started slightly as his eye fell upon it, and it was some time before he recollected himself. Lilias had been in the study early this morning, and she it was who had, unconsciously, made this alteration.

It was the chair of Charlie Graeme.

This room, now the study of the thoughtful, aged man, had been the favourite haunt of the schoolboy cousins long ago. Rusty armour, and heavy swords and axes, borne by the chiefs of Mossgray, when peace was unknown upon the Border, hung still upon the low, bare walls, and in one corner a pile of youthful implements, fishing-rods and the like, still bore witness to the different occupations once pursued under its roof; through all these long intervening years, since the household traitor left for the last time the house of the trustful friend, to whom his lost honour brought so severe a pang, "Charlie's chair" remained as he had left it, unoccupied by the solitary fireside. Now, for the first time, the sunlight slanted on this relic of the false man, and Mossgray sat with his eyes fixed upon it, thinking of the dead.

That morning he had received a letter from the Reverend Matthew Monikie, the pragmatical licentiate of the church, who kept the Aberdeenshire school, where Charlie's son had spent his youth. The letter was formally written, as became the man's profession, age, and character, with deductions somewhat authoritative. Halbert Graeme was nearly one and twenty; it was absolutely necessary, Mr. Monikie represented, that some provision should be made for his future life; that he should be placed in some situation where he could maintain himself.

Mossgray had made a resolution, and was determined to keep it. The son of Charlie Graeme should never be heir to the house in which his father had meditated so much treachery; it was better that the line of the old race should be utterly extinguished, than that it should spring anew from a

stock which displayed so much guile, and falsehood, and dishonour. Mossgray resolved to continue the yearly allowance he had given this youth, and to refuse him no specific aid or influence which he asked; but, "Let him not enter my presence," repeated the old man; "let me not be brought into contact with one whose motives I cannot trust, whose conduct may steel my heart both against himself and others. I wish him well, but let him not come near me."

It was unjust: it was almost the single conscious injustice with which even his own conscience could tax Adam Graeme of Mossgray, and in consequence he tried to banish it from his mind. As he sat thus musing, a melting of the heart came upon him. He could almost fancy, as he saw the sunbeams stealing over Charlie's chair,

that Charlie himself had risen from it even now.

Very shortly afterwards he joined Lilias. She was still sitting in the deep window-seat of the cheerful, old-fashioned drawing-room. The ruddy sunbeams just touched her pale head with a shadowy glory; her fingers were busily employed, her mind no less active. Not as Helen Buchanan would have done in the vivid dreams which took possession of her less serene spirit, but in the flush of a tranquil, gentle hope, weaving the mystic thread of her imagined destiny, over the unknown future which lay before her.

"Lilias," said her guardian, when they had been for some time engaged in conversation less personal, "I am the last of my race, but I have a fancy that I should like ill to be the last of my name. When I was as young as you are, there seemed to me a

peculiar charm and grace in the name I would have you bear—you must be Lilias Graeme."

"Gladly, if it pleases you, Mossgray," answered Lilias.

"It pleases me," said the old man, with his gentle smile; "it is strange how sometimes, Lilias, we have our early fancies realized in a way which, could we foresee it when we form them, we should think bitter mockery. This name! well, but the years fall tranquilly, and do a good work in the content they bring. I think they bring content—acquiescence at least in what Providence sends us."

"Is it always so?" said Lilias. She was thinking of her fretful, repining father, whose discontent was not allayed by years.

"I think so," said Mossgray: "we resist

when we are strong, but when this gentle hand of decay droops over us, we learn to think that what has befallen us was, after all, the best; but I did not intend to discuss melancholy matters with you, and youthful people, as I remember, think all sad that relates to the end. When that comes, Lilias—when you yourself are the lady of this old stronghold of the Graemes, remember that you have promised to bear their name."

Lilias laid down her work and looked steadily into her guardian's face.

"You shall call me by what name you please, but you must not give me Mossgray."

The old man shook his head and smiled.

"No no!" exclaimed Lilias hastily; "you have given me a home in my extremity—more than that, you have given me such

kindness as perhaps no other in the world could give. You have been my protector, my true father, and I thank you with all my heart; but there is no gift you can give me now half so precious as those I have received already. You have made me your child; after this I will take no inferior gift, not though it is all your land. I will be Lilias Graeme your daughter; but only while Mossgray is *your* home must it be mine."

Mossgray laid his hand gently on the young head which was inspired with energy so unusual.

"I thank you, my good Lilias; but even on your own showing you must take my inheritance; for I can have no heir so fitting as my own child."

"Mossgray," said Lilias, "you are not the last of your race."

A slight colour passed over the old man's face.

"You are right, Lilias," he said gravely, "there is yet one Graeme remaining of the blood; but even you must not speak to me of him."

Her face had been lifted to him full of eagerness: when he said that her countenance fell—she was silent.

"Nay," said her guardian kindly, "I do not mean that there is anything, Lilias, of which you may not speak to me with the utmost freedom; but this youth, this Halbert—you do not and cannot know how strong my reasons are for resolving never to see him, nor to suffer his presence at Mossgray."

"Is it for himself; has he displeased you himself, Mossgray?" asked Lilias, with some timidity.

Adam Graeme sat down near her, and met her shy glance with his own benign, unclouded smile.

"We will speak of him no more, Lilias, if you are afraid."

"No, no, I am not afraid," said Lilias, hurriedly; "but you must let me be proud—for myself and for you."

The old man smiled again.

"Surely, Lilias, if you will tell me how and why."

"For myself," said Lilias with some tremor in her voice, "because I would fain have you believe, Mossgray, that it is your own tenderness I prize, and not any gift—not any inheritance."

"I believe it already, Lilias—I need no proof."

"And besides," continued Lilias, "for everybody—all our neighbours—'the haill

water,' Mossgray. I must vindicate myself. I cannot have these good people think ill of me. They know you have given me everything I have; but they must not fancy that I grasp at all."

"Hush, Lilias," said the old man, "I cannot hear this. Well, I permit your own pride: it becomes you well enough; and now for me."

"And for you, Mossgray," said Lilias. "I am jealous that any one should have cause to say that once in your life you dealt unjustly—that you alienated his inheritance from one of your own blood because your kind heart had compassion on a stranger. I could not hear this said. For the very name's sake which you say I am to bear, I would shrink from such a reproach as this."

"It is unjust," said the old man. "I

almost believe you, Lilias; but suppose that I knew, and were sure, that far greater dishonour would come to the name, if Halbert Graeme inherited Mossgray, than could fall upon me for disowning him—what then? Would you still advise me to bestow all I have upon the son of a treacherous, false man?"

"I do not know him," said Lilias; "if he does otherwise than well, I am grieved for himself; but it has no effect upon me—it does not alter the right and the wrong; and you, Mossgray, who have never done injustice!"

"How have you heard, Lilias, of Halbert Graeme?" said the old man. "Did you ever meet him in your wanderings that you plead his cause so warmly?"

"No—oh, no. I have only heard of him, principally here at home, where they cannot

forget that he is a son of the house," said Lilias; "and some one has brought them word that he is good and generous, and worthy to be your successor. Will you not see with your own eyes whether it is so?"

"You are a Quixote, Lilias," said Mossgray, "you have the epidemic generosity of youth upon you just now. When you are old, you will be wiser, perhaps—who can tell—than to throw away your own prospects for the sake of a stranger whom you never saw."

"I do not know that it is well to be so wise," said Lilias; "and I shall not learn from you, Mossgray."

"In this point I cannot answer for myself," said the old man. "I have had an experience bitterer than usual; but let us not speak of that: we have had enough

of Halbert Graeme. Who are to be your guests, Lilias, in our first essay at hospitality? have you determined?"

"I specially beg an invitation for only one," said Lilias; "and perhaps I do ill to ask that; but—I remember what it is to be poor and alone."

"And who is your one guest?" said Mossgray.

"It is Helen Buchanan;—you have seen her, Mossgray; she is only a humble teacher in Fendie: but she is—"

"I know her," said the courteous Adam Graeme, to whom the word gentlewoman was, as to Hope Oswald, the highest of feminine titles. "Why should you hesitate to invite her, Lilias?"

"Because," said Lilias, with a smile, "the young ladies, the young landed ladies, Mossgray, may think her not good enough

to meet them; but I made a promise to Hope Oswald to do what I could to honour Helen in the presence of Hope's father."

"So Hope begins to scheme," said Mossgray smiling; "and the cause, Lilias?"

"I think it has some connection with Mr. William Oswald; indeed, Mrs. Oswald almost told me, that his father's very stern resolution alone prevents—"

"I understand," said the old man, as Lilias hesitated and blushed with a not unnatural sympathy. "His father's resolution—pooh! his father will break it."

"Do you think so, Mossgray?"

"I begin to think, Lilias," said Mossgray, turning to leave the room, "that resolutions are made only to be broken. May it fare with Mr. Oswald as it has done with me; but remember," and the old man looked back from the door with some humour in

his face, "I do not mean in the matter of Halbert Graeme."

He did not mean it—he was still *resolved;* and yet when he returned to his study, it was to look long at the declining sunlight as it gilded the ancient carvings of Charlie's chair, and to think gently of the dead. A certain poetic, half-superstitious feeling, which became him well, hindered him from restoring to its original position the old seat of Charlie Graeme. He suffered the sunshine to dwell upon it like a reconciling smile.

CHAPTER XIII.

Marry, he hath a proper person, a brain indifferent well garnished; comes of a good lineage; hath a bold spirit; poor, I deny not; but what doth your young gallant propose to himself, I pray you, but to try a wrestle and a fall with Fortune?

OLD PLAY.

On the same evening the Edinburgh coach, when it arrived at the door of the George Inn, at Fendie, deposited there a young adventurer fresh from the far North. He had been travelling on the outside of the coach, and was benumbed with cold,

though his face glowed from contact with the wind. A small portmanteau was the extent of his luggage, and beyond that his worldly possessions were of the smallest; good looks, good blood, an honest heart, a happy temper, and five one-pound notes in the end of a blue silken purse—he had nothing more.

It was no great amount of capital with which to begin the arduous struggle of life; and upon his glowing healthful face, there sat a little anxiety which was not by any means care. He had one special and particular aim in this journey, but if it failed, how many means of success yet offered themselves to the young, hopeful, ingenuous spirit, with the world lying all before him, where to choose.

The stranger hastily entered the inn and ordered some very simple refreshments.

It was his first considerable journey, and the youth was not without the natural shyness which attends those who have passed all their lives in the quietness of one domestic circle. When he had discussed the inexpensive meal placed before him, and thoroughly thawed himself before the fire, and resolved one of his pound notes into shillings by the payment of his bill, the young man, much to the surprise of the waiter at the George, began to button his great-coat once more.

"Do you know," he inquired, "how far it is to Mossgray?—there is a place called Mossgray in the neighbourhood, is there not?"

The waiter answered readily in the affirmative with the addition that it was "maybes, a mile," and an inquiry if the gentleman would want a conveyance.

The gentleman thought he should not—

a mile was no great distance—and requested his attendant to direct him how to go.

The waiter, encouraged by seeing the portmanteau left behind, graciously complied. The youth's appearance was frank and prepossessing, and the waiter at the George was a good-humoured fellow, so he extended his courtesy so far as to look out upon the idlers round the door—it was the evening of the market-day—and ask,

"Is there ony of you gaun the road to Mossgray?"

John Brown, Mrs. Fendie's factotum, was within hearing. He had been down making purchases at the market, and now with his light cart moderately well filled, was about starting home. On hearing the question he responded briskly,

"Ay, I'm gaun to the Mount—wha's speiring?"

"Is't you, John Brown?" said the waiter; "there's a gentlemen here a stranger, that disna ken the road. He's gaun to Mossgray."

"If he's a decent lad," said the authoritative John, "I'll gie him a hurl if he likes; and if he's no a decent lad, or if he's ower proud to ride in a cart, if he can keep up wi' the powny, I'll let him see the road."

The stranger laughed, and having, as it seemed no particular scruples of pride, sprang lightly up on the front of John's cart, and thanked him for the promised "hurl." It was a very frosty, chill night; John somewhat gruffly threw one of the rough home-made plaids of which he had been making a cushion for himself, over the knees of the new-comer.

"Ye'll ken the laird?" said John as they emerged out of the Main Street.

"No—at least I have never seen him," said the young man.

John uttered a discontented "humph," and changed his tactics.

"It's a mair inviting place noo than it used to be, for young folk."

"Is it?" said the impracticable stranger. "I have never been at Mossgray."

"Ay," said John dryly, fancying he was now sure of a more satisfactory answer; "but ye'll ken the young lady it's like?"

"The young lady!" exclaimed his companion in evident astonishment. "Is there a young lady at Mossgray?"

John Brown was brought to a stand-still—he was half angry at his failure.

"Ay, nae doubt there's a young lady; ye maunna hae been living nearhand here

or ye would have heard of the young lady of Mossgray."

"You don't mean," said the young man hurriedly, "that Mr. Graeme is married?"

A long gruff laugh answered the question, to the considerable relief of the inquirer, before John was able to say,

"Man, ye may ken mony things, but ye dinna ken the Laird!"

"No, indeed I do not," said the stranger, echoing John's laugh; "but pray tell me who the young lady is."

"Ye see," said John, "the laird was to have been married langsyne—the time's past minding—it was lang or ever ye were born or heard tell o'; but ye'll no prevent the lass frae seeing somebody she likit better,—and a shilpit chield he was, no fit to haud the candle to Mossgray;—sae the short and the lang o't is, that the twaesome ran away,

and the laird was left without his bride, and took it sair to heart, as I have heard. Aweel, there was nae mair word o't till a young lady came to the Mount—that's where I am—to learn the young lasses the kind of havers that's guid enough for the like o' them; and wha should this be but the daughter of the laird's auld joe, and nae suner was't found out, than she behoved to gang hame to Mossgray, and as muckle wark made about her as if she had been a crowned head, let alane a bit peenging lassie: and there she's been, ever since, mistress and mair. The word gangs that she'll get a' the land; but I canna think that Mossgray would pass ower his ain bluid for a stranger, and they say there are some of the name to the fore yet."

The young man made no answer, and just at this crisis, John Brown pulled up his horse

opposite a lane which sloped down to the waterside.

"Ye see yon light? it's in the laird's study, for he's an awfu' feelosophical man. Yon's Mossgray; if ye hand straight down ye canna miss't."

There was only the partial light of the moon to guide the stranger, as he turned the sudden angle of one of the accumulated buildings, which formed the house of Mossgray. Dimly seen, and in glimpses, as these clouds flitted across the moon, the old house looked grand, and imposing to the inexperienced eyes eagerly gazing upon it. A thrill of family pride, the first he had ever felt, made the young man draw himself up, and hold his head higher, as he looked at the heavy bulk of the old tower, rising between him and the sky. In the projecting turret high up yonder,

and from the small deep windows in its rugged wall, gleams the light which John Brown pointed out. The Laird's study—the heart of the adventurer beat high, as he tried to prepare himself to meet this stern Laird, half dreaded, half defied.

Lower down in a more modern part of the house, from larger windows of some household sitting-room, warm light was shining, and close beside the visitor as he stood surveying the dark mass of building, was the cheerful kitchen fire and lamp. The young man did not perceive that at the uncurtained kitchen window, there were curious faces watching him. He lingered with natural hesitation before presenting himself to the unknown Mossgray, whose welcome was so dubious; but while he lingered, another face appeared at the low window near him. The old housekeeper,

with excited curiosity, had come to see for herself who the intruder was. A loud exclamation aroused him.

"God preserve us!—we never did ye ill. Have ye come to warn us of our end, Charlie Graeme?"

He saw an aged face, strangely convulsed with terror, fall back upon the shoulder of a strong middle-aged woman who stood behind, as the shrill cry ceased; and hastily advancing, he discovered the kitchen door, and knocked. For some time his summons was not attended to; at last a decent grey-haired elderly man opened it, and looked out, not without timidity. The young man asked for Mr. Graeme, and was silently admitted.

In an old elbow-chair by the fire, sat the housekeeper of Mossgray, hysterically wringing her withered hands.

"I never did him ill! Oh guid send he be come for me, and no for the innocent callant that he did enow mischief too, when he was in the flesh; but ye saw it, Saunders Delvie—ye saw the Appearance as weel as me."

"I tell ye, Auntie," said Janet, "it was nae Appearance; it was a mortal lad, as life-like as either you or me."

"Will you be so good as tell me," said the stranger, "if Mr. Graeme is at home?"

The old woman sat stiffly erect, gazing at him with rigid terror.

"And where should the Laird be, I would like to ken," said Janet, testily, "but just in Mossgray?"

The young man smiled. The light of the fire fell full upon his ruddy, animated face. Mrs. Mense's fears began to abate; he was no Appearance after all.

"Wha are ye?" asked the old woman with some solemnity. "Tell me that you're no Charlie Graeme?"

"My name is Halbert," said the stranger. "It is my father you mean, and I am like him, I hear."

Mrs. Mense rose, and advancing to the young representative of the Graemes, looked earnestly into his face. The youth's colour rose under the scrutiny, but the blush was accompanied by a good-humoured smile: the result was satisfactory.

"Guid grant that it prove what it looks —a true face," said the old woman, as she turned away. "Take him up to the young lady—I'll tell Mossgray mysel; but no—bide a wee Janet, I'll show the gentleman the road."

The penalty which he paid for entering the house by the kitchen door, was the

threading of various dark passages, linked together by short flights of stairs. The old woman panted and lost her breath as she toiled on before him.

"These stairs must weary you," said Halbert, kindly; "had you not better direct me, and I will go on myself."

"Your father would have cared little for trouble to the like of me," said Mrs. Mense, emphatically; "and you're a guid lad to mind; but I maun tell Mossgray mysel."

Lilias Maxwell sat alone, leaning upon a small table in the cheerful drawing-room. A desk stood near her covered with notes of invitation which she had been writing for the great party which her guardian insisted on giving in her honour. She had finished these and was sitting, thoughtfully looking at a book before her, which she did not read. She was thinking of

what she could do to help forward the cause of Halbert Graeme.

Just then the door opened, and Lilias started in surprise as Mrs. Mense entered, followed by the young man, who, in his flutter of spirits, looked as he was—a remarkably handsome and prepossessing youth.

"I'm gaun to tell Mossgray," said the housekeeper; "and Miss Lilias, this is Mr. Halbert Graeme."

There was a little awkwardness at first, which the serene bearing and temper of Lilias got through perhaps scarcely so well as Helen Buchanan's embarrassed frankness would have done; but they surmounted it, and talked about Halbert's journey, while Mrs. Mense laboriously panted up the old staircase of the tower, to the study of the Laird.

The Laird sat among his books not very attentive to them—his mind had wan-

dered to other things; and by the fireplace stood Charlie's chair, still turned towards the light—towards the faint pale moonbeams which, dimmed, but not quenched by the artificial light, stole in like something spiritual across the dusky wall.

"Mr. Adam," said the old woman, advancing to the table in the strength of her unwonted agitation, "I have seen this night a face I never thought to see, under the rooftree of Mossgray, or with my old e'en again. I have looked upon the face of your cousin, Charlie Graeme."

Mossgray started nervously, and raised his head; that gray, pale, old man's head which to his faithful servant looked still young.

"I thought it was an Appearance sent to warn us of our end" said Mrs. Mense solemnly "and my heart failed me, Mossgray, because I

kent, that whate'er your better spirit may have done I had ne'er forgiven him, no when he was dead. But it was nae Appearance; the face is the face of a living man, and if its like him, it has that in it, that in his bravest days he never had. The lad's face is a true face, Mr. Adam. I have lived near fourscore years, and I have learned to ken."

"Who is it, Nancy?" said Mossgray.

"He says they ca' him Halbert Graeme. I pat him in the big room beside Miss Lilias; they're a bonnie couple as e'e could look upon, and he's Mr. Charlie's son."

There was a brief struggle; the old feeling of suspicion and distrust came up for a moment over the warm heart of Adam Graeme; but like all unnatural things, it was shortlived and he recovered himself.

"I will judge him by his own merits," said the just Laird of Mossgray, "for long ago, Charlie Graeme, long ago, when your treachery was scarcely done, I forgave you."

A footstep on the stair interrupted the conversation in the drawing-room; it brought the colour almost painfully to Halbert's cheek as he sat in anxious expectation, and when Mossgray entered the room, the youth rose and stood before him, hesitating and embarrassed. He scarcely observed the stateliness of the old man's demeanour; he did not see how the face which at first was only gravely courteous, softened and melted as it looked upon his own. Lilias interposed, as they stood silently looking at each other.

"Mossgray," she said, her calm face and

tone restoring them both to self-possession; "this is Halbert Graeme."

And then the old man bade him welcome to Mossgray.

It was not in his generous, gentle nature to suffer any guest to remain uneasy under his roof; whatever his purpose might be towards the stranger he could not have been otherwise than kindly courteous as became an host; and Halbert was so ingenuous in his young, frank manhood, so fresh and confident in his untried hopes—so bold of venturing on the world which yet he did not know, that the heart of his kinsman warmed towards him. It *was* a true face, honest, manful and guileless, with the boyish bloom upon it still, half bashful, half bold. The old man could ill be stern at any time, but now the artificial restraint gradually gave way; he resigned himself

to the natural guidance of his heart, and Halbert Graeme was installed that night a member of Mossgray's family—another child.

CHAPTER XIV.

Simple, grave, sincere.

COWPER.

WILLIAM OSWALD, the banker's son, inherited in some degree the disposition of his father; but the bitterness of the original stock was modified in the branch. A grave, decided, firm man, his character had already developed itself; but he was not obstinate. His mind was open at all points to truth, and strong and tenacious as was the grass

of his opinion, he was still convinceable, and did not wilfully shut his eyes against the light from what quarter soever it came. And William Oswald, though a thoroughly natural and warm-hearted man, and with indeed a singular degree of ardour under his gravity, was of the stuff which made stoics in the old Roman times. He had a power of self-denial and self-restraint which is at all times a very considerable weapon, and could hold steadily on, past all the temptations of pleasure — past even the natural resting-place which wooed him to needed repose, on direct to his end. He did not speak about it; he made no demonstration of his ceaseless pursuit; but he fixed his dark glowing eyes clearly and steadily upon his aim, and went on, swerving neither to the right hand nor the left—able to give up pleasure, ease—able to endure toil and

solitude, and with a definite, clear end before him, to pursue his way unfalteringly till it was gained.

He had been "bred a writer," as the sons of respectable, wealthy, middle-class men in Scotland frequently are, whether they be intended to practise the law as a profession or no; and there had been some talk of William succeeding Mr. Shaw *the* writer in Fendie in his great business. But William it appeared, did not choose to enter into partnership with young Mr. Nichol Shaw, and in the meantime he was resting ingloriously in the obscure labours of his father's office.

And it greatly chafed the impatient spirit of Helen Buchanan that it should be so. Like most imaginative, youthful women, Helen fancied the freedom and license of mankind one of the greatest possible gifts.

There was no glorious "might be" which did not seem to her ideal vision, open to the ambition of *a man*. The exceeding might of virtuous influence—the empire of the generous, brave spirit over its fellows—once on this free eminence of manhood, and the ardent mind knew that these would be hers —they were possible to men—above all to the one man upon whom the fair garments of her ideal began to fall.

And Helen chafed unconsciously that William Oswald should be content with this inglorious life. The humble teacher of the little girls of Fendie aspired to a higher intellectual firmament; there were ambitious hopes and dreams and wishes stirring in the bare school-room, enough to have startled the little town out of its propriety; wishes, and dreams, and hopes of a more daring kind than ever young lady in Fendie had

entertained before; and Helen Buchanan scarcely ranked as a young lady. She was noticed by none of the magnates, and courted in no society—she was simply the schoolmistress; the people of Fendie, young and old, would have been overwhelmed with astonishment to hear of her ambition.

But William Oswald knew it, and his temper agreed as little as her own with the ease of inactivity. He was not the man to prefer the temporary pleasure of even her society, greatly as he prized it, to the necessary work of life; and he too had the upward tendency. He could not be content with the easy indolent satisfaction of competence, and already believing that the strong and vigorous youth within him was destined for something nobler than the businesses or amusements of the little country-town, his energy was stimulated by

hers. They stood at this time almost upon terms of mutual defiance, yet each unconsciously supplemented the strength and had a share in all the secret purposes of the other. Their own individual combat was close and exciting, yet in the very act of resisting they invigorated each other for their several wrestles with the world without. They were neither of a very peaceable nature; it suited them to manage their wooing so.

But William's plans were laid. He had determined to return to Edinburgh to practise his profession. When he had won an independent position and name for himself—and to do that was of itself an end worth striving for—he felt that he should be much more likely to overcome the obstinate opposition of his father. The Banker was proud of his family, and William a known man, occupying a standing ground honourably

acquired by his own exertions, might expect to be differently treated from William the unknown who had no other position than that which belonged to Mr. Oswald's son.

His mother assented with a sigh; she foresaw a different end to the romance of her son's youth. He also, the cold voice of experience prophecied, would learn to approve those views of worldly wisdom, would forget the generous impulses of young life—would acquiesce in the prudent decisions of his father. Mrs. Oswald too was prudent; but her heart shrank from beholding the film of calculating foresight fall upon the frank vision of her only son. She could almost have chosen the imprudent marriage sooner than the chill wisdom which would make it impossible.

The Banker consented readily to William's project; it was likely, *he* thought, to accom-

plish a twofold good:—to establish the young man's fortunes steadily, on a basis of good work entered into with the freshness of youth, and to detach him from his foolish liking to the poor schoolmistress, who, gentlewoman as Hope asserted her to be, he was resolved to receive into his family—never!

So, although on grounds so different the father and mother consented, and the grave, firm, undemonstrative son, the depths of whose nature were too profound to be frozen over as his mother feared by the icy prudence of the world, mapped out his own course, knowing better than they did, the tenacious constancy of his own mind. It was no boyish fancy which moved him; the light emotions of youthful liking were very different from this, and there was nothing from which the ardent, grave

spirit stood in so little peril as change.

On a dull evening, late in December, he sat by Mrs. Buchanan's fireside waiting till Mrs. Buchanan's daughter should leave her school-room and her pupils. William Oswald had been a favourite long ago with his father's sensitive partner, and was a favourite with Mrs. Buchanan of so long standing, that before the unfortunate hour in which he astonished with unwonted eloquence the wondering ears of Helen, and raised the *questio vexata*, which at present did so strangely unite and disunite them, his prospects and purposes had been as confidentially discussed in Mrs. Buchanan's parlour as at home; and still, though Helen's mother began to feel strongly interested in the prosperity of the Reverend Robert Insches, it was impossible to break through

the old familiar use and wont which bound her to William Oswald almost like a mother to a son. In his absence she could fancy the Reverend Robert very eligible, but in his presence she felt almost unwillingly that it could be none but he, the daily long accustomed visitor—the son trained into all their simple habitudes—the friend whom they knew so thoroughly, and who so thoroughly knew them.

To this friendly, confidential footing he was very anxious to return to-night. He wanted to discuss his plans with them, to make Helen aware of the course which he projected for himself. Since he made the plunge, and relinquished his place as friend to claim a nearer one, the attempt had cost him much; not only the constraint which it had placed upon his intercourse with his father, but the loss of Helen's

society which it involved; so he resolved for this night to ignore their past struggle and to be only the old familiar friend, the son of the house.

Mrs. Buchanan and her visitor sat together silently, both of them somewhat sad. The sound of the children's footsteps and subdued voices broke the stillness, and almost immediately Helen entered the room. The candle was not lighted, for Mrs. Buchanan liked the twilight, and was thrifty besides, economizing the daylight as she did other things. She was seated before the fire, which only shed a ruddy glow upon her face, and did not in any degree light the dusky room. Withdrawn in a corner of the sofa, William Oswald sat unseen.

"Mother," exclaimed Helen as she entered, "I have been thinking all day of my old plan of going to Edinburgh. You

remember what Hope Oswald said about Miss Swinton; and the letter I wrote to her has been lying in my desk for a month. I wish you would consent, mother; I wish you would let me send it."

"But, Helen my dear," said the less hasty mother, "you must take no such step without consideration."

"What can we do here, mother," said Helen eager for the moment, in the strength of impulse. "What can we do here—always the same—no possibility of changing this dull routine of labour—no chance of rising higher. I shall not always be young," and the sudden change from warm hope to depression fell upon the variable face in an instant, "and so long as I am, should we not provide."

"Helen, my dear," repeated the gentle Mrs. Buchanan, "you distress me when you

say such things; besides, it is nonsense, you know."

Helen did not answer; she sat down on the other side of the fire, and leaned her head upon her hand. The dim cloud of melancholy hovered over her—for the moment the young sunshine was gone. It *was* a dull routine—a laborious life—cheered only by the special inheritance of fair and gracious things which had been given her in her own spirit, and sometimes the cloud overshadowed even these.

"Helen," said the grave, firm voice whose power over her changeful moods she strenuously resisted, and even to herself would not acknowledge. "*I* am going to Edinburgh."

She started—the quick thrill of her varying nature went over her, carrying the cloud on its sudden breath. A flush of evanescent

offence sprang over her face, as she looked past her mother to the dark figure which began to be dimly visible on the sofa. Her purpose had changed on the moment, but she was half angry that she had been anticipated.

"Yes," said Mrs. Buchanan rising hastily to light the solitary candle, "William is not content to live quietly at home, Helen. The air of Fendie is too still for him."

There was a slight drawing up of the stooping figure—an almost imperceptible expanding of the breast—a hurried, momentary glance at William, in which only one who had long studied it, could discriminate the proud, shy pleasure tinged as it was by a certain sadness, with which Helen heard this news.

"He is quite right," she said quickly.

"Do you think so?" asked William;

"but what if I only lose myself yonder in the crowd, and remain as unknown as I am now?"

"I know you will not," said Helen. Then she recollected herself. "I mean—yes, William Oswald, I mean you will not—you will do better than that."

He was still in the shadow, and while he could observe every change of her features, she could scarcely see the dark glow of pleasure which covered his face.

"But, Helen, you think of fame—and I will never win fame; hundreds fail every year of acquiring the mere standing ground. Is it worth hazarding quietness and peace, and giving up home as I shall do, think you, for the chance of such distinction—only small distinction Helen—as I can ever reach?"

Her pulse began to beat more quickly—

strong in those young warm veins of hers, ran the tide of her ambition.

"I do not mean distinction—that is," said the truthful Helen, who felt that in some degree she did mean it; "I mean things graver and nobler before distinction. I think the old chivalry will never die out of the world, William; to be a knight—to carry arms against all the powers of evil—to win new lands to acknowledge our king—whatever we have to work at for our bread, that remains the real work to live for, as it seems to me, and I know nothing so precious but one might peril it—nothing so dear but one would give it up for such a cause as that."

Her voice shook a little with the excitement that made it strong—the stooping head was quite erect—the eyes shining like stars.

Mrs. Buchanan sat a little apart looking at

them—observing with quiet, smiling wonder how the grave face of the silent uncommunicative William began to speak and grow eloquent too, as it bent towards the other countenance whose thoughts were so "legible i' the eie."

But he seemed more inclined to listen than to speak.

"I grant you that," said William; "but suppose, Helen, a man should distrust his own powers, and think it most expedient to keep himself apart from all struggles—to withdraw far away from the evils he has not strength to contend with—what then?"

"Then he does not fulfil his end," said the rapid, eager voice—"which is not to flee from natural temptations and difficulties, but bravely to resist and do battle with the same. I know one feels one's heart sink often. It may not be so with you who are strong—

but *I* feel that to cease such work and warfare as one is called to do, does bring a perilous sinking of the heart. It is not well —surely it is not well to withdraw from the evils which are in us, and about us; we are bound to do battle with them, William—not to stand on our defence alone, but to carry the war into the camp of the enemies. I think sometimes that the state of war must be the only good state for those who have sin natural to them as we have—and that if these words, resist and struggle, were withdrawn from our language we should be no longer human; for when we let our arms fall, our hearts fall, and weariness comes upon us, and distrust and gloom; and out of the living, moving world we come into the narrow chamber of ourselves—and the sun sets upon us, William."

The sun had set in the changeful face

upon which William Oswald looked, and for the moment its waning colour and downcast eyes proclaimed the unmistakeable sinking of the heart. She did not perceive the look that dwelt upon her, nor its language—language unconsciously powerful. "And this, Helen, is your philosophy." The words fell dreamily upon her ear, echoing through a long silence. The philosophy was not her's alone. Kindred thoughts had risen in the young minds, as they grew together into the early flush of maturity, and now she sent him forth—a knight.

CHAPTER XV.

Saucy fortune, did'st thou smile,
I perchance would little heed thee;
Think'st thou when thou frown'st, the while
For myself I dread thee?
Nay, not I—I only vow,
If one falls, it shall be thou.

ANON.

"I AM a man now," said Halbert Graeme, with something of the pride of his years; "and, thanks to your goodness, Sir, I have education enough for any ordinary profession. If only I could make a beginning—"

"You would certainly succeed," said the

Laird of Mossgray, with his pleasant, kindly smile.

"I do not know," said Halbert, modestly; "but I think that men who are content to work hard and persevere, must surely have some measure of success. I am not very ambitious—that is—"

"I shall not quarrel with you, Halbert, my man, for your ambition," said the gentle kinsman, whom Halbert had feared as stern.

"Well, Sir," said the youth, with renewed confidence, "I should like to rise, no doubt; but I am willing to work hard for it, and quite content to begin as humbly as you think it proper I should. I have no right, I know, to such help, where I have already received so much; but I have the claim of blood on no one I have ever known,

and I thought I might ask advice from you."

It was his second day at Mossgray, and Halbert remembered his last walk up the Aberdeenshire glen, a week ago, with Menie Monikie, and his declaration to her—

"I will tell him, I don't come to ask anything from him, Menie—I know he has been kind to me already—but he must know the world better than we do. Your father says he has been in India—and if I could but begin to maintain myself—*then*, Menie!"

And Halbert remembered what followed this *then*—the breaking of that slender golden coin, one half of which, hung by Menie's blue ribbon, was warm against his own strong youthful breast, and the following farewell, with its tears and smiles, and visions of reunion; and Halbert's honest heart

beat something loudly, and he grew bold and eager—if he only could begin.

"Halbert," said Mossgray, gently, "your father and I did not part friends. I thought he had not dealt truly by one whom I cherished as a sister, and it was in consequence of that, perhaps unwisely, that I denied myself the satisfaction of seeing another Graeme grow a man in this old house of Mossgray; but you say truly that it is time to decide on your future profession. Are you very impatient for this beginning?"

The kindly eye of Mossgray could not see through the warm double-breasted waistcoat, with which the care of Mrs. Monikie had provided Halbert for his journey. The Laird had no knowledge of the mystic half of the broken coin, nor had ever heard the musical name of Menie. He thought, therefore, that this beginning was not so very mo-

mentous, and that it might be put off for a time without any particular disadvantage; and Halbert stammered as he answered. His kinsman thought it was but the natural shyness of youth.

"You must let us know you better," he continued, "and I shall qualify myself to advise; in the meantime, Halbert, remember that you are at *home*. You have all the beauties of your ancestral district to see, and I promise you they are not few. While you learn to know them and us, we shall consult on this important matter. Are you content?"

Halbert could not be otherwise than content; the grace of the old man's kindness charmed the young fresh spirit, and it was no penance to remain a member of that household of Mossgray, even though the fortune was not yet begun to make, and

Menie Monikie disconsolately wandered in the Aberdeenshire glen alone. So Halbert took possession of his father's former room, and wrote pleasant letters to the North—letters, on receipt of which the pragmatical licentiate took pinches of mighty snuff in sign of satisfaction, and declared that "the lad, Halbert, was a lad born to a good estate, and would do credit to them all."

But Mossgray began to behold festivities within its quiet walls; and great was the interest and expectation among the invited guests, from Mrs. Maxwell, of Firthside, painfully selecting from her Georgina's abundant wardrobe, the dress which would best become her, to Mrs. Buchanan, in her little parlour, deliberating long and carefully over that one black silk gown of Helen's. It was sò very unusual, that all

were curious about the long suspended hospitalities of Mossgray.

In the little household itself, there was some degree of excitement as they assembled in the drawing-room to await their guests. Lilias, with her mourning dress more studied than usual, looked almost as pale as when she first came to Mossgray, and sat in her ordinary seat, so serene and calm in appearance, even though her pulse did own a little acceleration, that the young joyous Halbert compared her in his fancy to one of those fair spirits of the air, nearer humanity than angels are, whose eyes are yet so much clearer than ours, as to unseen woes and perils, that men always paint them sad. Yet Lilias was not sad: the stillness of grief grown tranquil did indeed still temper all her feelings, but there were

warm and pleasant hopes no less swelling in the even current of her mind. Only with these hopes, the strangers about to be gathered round her had little sympathy and no concern, and involuntarily, with that quick instinct which makes us feel most solitary in a crowd, the thoughts of Lilias had travelled far away, and were dwelling with one who laboured alone in a strange country over the sea.

Very different were the feelings of the young betrothed of Menie Monikie; but if Halbert was by no means intense, he was very honest. He had written to Menie, proclaiming his anticipated enjoyment of this same festivity, and promising a faithful record of it, and having thus done all that was needful for the absent, he stood before the cheerful fire in great spirits, listening

for the first sound of wheels, and exceedingly satisfied with his position.

The Laird of Mossgray sat at some little distance from the younger members of his family, and seemed to be busied with a book. He was not reading, however; he was observing their differing looks and feelings, and thinking of the strange conclusion which their presence in his house put to his solitary and recluse life. Both he had determined to keep at a distance from him; both had been shut out, by his grave and deliberate resolution from his presence and his affection; and yet both were here. Secretly the old man smiled at himself, and at the trustful nature which now was too old to learn suspicion; secretly smiled at the vanity of those brittle barriers called resolutions, with which men stem, or try to stem, the

tide of nature—resolutions made to be broken; and in his kindly philosophy he shook his head at his yielding self, and smiled.

The expected company began to arrive. A faint colour rose on the calm cheek of the youthful hostess as she received them, and the young representative of the Mossgray Graemes, felt the ingenuous blood glow in his face as eye after eye fell upon him, and acquaintance after acquaintance was made. He felt that there was great consideration paid him, and that, however matters might eventually be decided, it was very clear that these dignified landed people looked upon him, Halbert Graeme, as the heir of Mossgray.

Helen Buchanan, feeling very shy, and proud, and *de trop*, sat by herself in a corner. Near enough for her to hear every

word of their conversation, were a group of ladies, old and young, whose glances fell upon her often, but who took no further notice of the humble guest. Girls were among them, gay and confident—mothers, kindly and solicitous, but all looked at her with cold, criticising eyes, and no one said a word of courtesy, or made the slightest attempt to admit her within their circle. They knew her very well; some had been specially introduced to her by her friend Lilias, who was at present occupied with other guests, yet they all suffered her to sit alone and in silence like a Pariah, while their cheerful, animated conversation went on so near. The proud heart swelled bitterly as she listened; for Helen had unconsciously attached importance to this invitation, and accepted it with a flutter of the heart. The disappointment was very painful; it

brought the melancholy of her temperament upon her: had it not been for the bulwark of her pride, Helen, out of those downcast, indignant, gleaming eyes, could have shed bitter tears.

Her own shy frankness, which could not rest till it had established terms of kindly intercourse with all who came near her, and the pain it gave herself to see any one uneasy, made her feel the slight the more. So well it would have become one of those comely mothers to spread the shield of their protection over the stranger—so seemly it would have been for the well-endowed and many-friended girls beside her, to have helped her with the frank friendship of youth. Helen drew back into her corner, and felt the pain of being alone in all its bitterness. She did not know that the gracious courtesy of which she

thought, was a thing like genius born and not made—a gift in which the ignoble have no part.

The Reverend Robert Insches was there. He hovered about the group at Helen's side, but he did not come near herself. She felt his desertion also a little. The Reverend Robert would have cheered her loneliness with all his heart, but he saw no other person who condescended to seek the society of the plebeian schoolmistress of Fendie; and the Reverend Robert was also by origin plebeian, and trembled for his acquired position. So he dared not draw all eyes upon himself, by volunteering the attention which no one else seemed inclined to give.

Lilias was fully occupied with other strangers at the opposite end of the room. Mrs. Oswald, after she had saluted Helen

with a kindness peculiarly delicate and cordial, thought it most expedient to remain at a distance from her; and William stood watching the changes of the sad, indignant, solitary face until he could bear the pain of the averted look no longer. There was a slight stir in the group of ladies, and among the attendant masculine hangers-on, as William Oswald came quietly to Helen's side. The Reverend Robert became envious and jealous—the ladies looked towards the corner, with suppressed whispers and tittering—the banker watched them with the dark hue of anger on his brow; and with no kind face anywhere, except the one by her side, whose look she would not meet, the bitterness swelled up almost to bursting within the heart of Helen.

Just then the Laird of Mossgray began to see how it fared with the one guest whose

presence Lilias had desired, and in his graceful old-world courtesy he drew near to relieve her. As he passed on to Helen's corner, his attention was claimed at every step; but Mossgray passed through the happier groups, smilingly parrying the attacks made upon him.

"I have something to say to Miss Buchanan."

William Oswald silently made room for him, and the face of Helen lightened as she met the benign smile of the gracious old man. The group of ladies turned their eyes towards her, now with no tittering—the Reverend Robert insinuated his tall figure into the vacant space behind her chair, and in the distance the banker vainly resisted, as she could perceive, the strong curiosity which turned his eyes towards her. She was a little interested, in spite of herself,

in the looks and attitudes of William's father, and the new animation which lighted up her face had some pique in it. The mercurial temperament sprang up elastic and buoyant from the depths; and the bystanders who had so long ignored her presence, began to listen now, and to draw closer. One only moved to a greater distance than before, and the smile of proud pleasure on his face told well enough what feeling it was, which prompted him to stand apart and only look on.

The banker was almost tempted to draw near himself, and ascertain whether the conversation in which there were now various interlocutors, but the leaders of which were certainly the old man and the humble plebeian Helen, corresponded at all with the singularly variable face, to which his eyes were attracted against his will; but

for very shame he could not make any advance. Mrs. Oswald and Lilias were quietly conversing beside him. He could not quite hear what they said, but he could distinguish the frequent name of Helen; the obstinate man grew angrily inquisitive; they were all in a conspiracy against him.

He saw Mossgray change his position; he saw Helen rise, and with some evident shyness take the old man's offered arm. They came towards him; the stern banker was conscious of some excitement. He changed his position, cleared his throat, and twisted up in his hands a roll of engravings which lay on a small table beside him, to their entire destruction, and the secret delight of his watching wife.

"I have brought Miss Buchanan to see our picture," said the old man. "Mrs. Oswald, has Lilias suffered you to see the

portrait, for which I must borrow my young friend's pleasant name—have you seen the Lily of Mossgray?"

The banker's eyes were fascinated to the life-like nervous figure which stood so near him. The swift, instantaneous movements—the look which read the remainder of Mossgray's words before his sentence was half spoken—the moving of the lip, which seemed to repeat them as if in unconscious impatience of their tardiness. She was not like her father; he could see, even in this glance—and with something of "the stern joy which foemen feel," he perceived it—that the irritation which killed poor Walter Buchanan, would have been but a spur to this elastic nature; and even Mr. Oswald, strongly as he held by all the proprieties, could not but smile to think

of the common-place people round him, "looking down" upon Helen.

"I have seen no Lily at Mossgray but one," said Mrs. Oswald, "and was just venturing to reprove *her* for retaining her paleness so long. Helen, I wish we could borrow some of your elasticity for Miss Maxwell."

"That so Helen might withdraw from me the name she has given," said Lilias, smiling; "and Mossgray forget that I am like his favourite flower; no, no, that will not do; but the picture—I did not think any one would be interested in the picture: and Helen has seen it, Mossgray?"

"Helen only saw it in its earliest sketch," said the old man. "Come, I must exhibit it."

It was in a little room, which opened from

the drawing-room, a very small place, looking like a recess of the larger apartment. Mossgray led his young companion in, followed by Mrs. Oswald and Lilias. The banker made a few steps after them, but suddenly discovering that William watched him, he made a spasmodic halt at the door.

The little room was not brilliantly lighted, and the picture stood leaning against the wall. Lilias had begged that it should not be hung in its future place of honour, until after this evening. It was a very good and truthful portrait, with a pale pure light in its colouring in keeping with the subject. The scene was an antique turret-room in the oldest quarter of the house of Mossgray, which had been a chamber of dais when the old stock of the moss-trooping Graemes began to gather riches and to desire peace.

There were carvings of venerable oak about it, and furniture of a very old date; the Laird had especially chosen this room as the background for the portrait of Lilias.

And Lilias herself looked out from the brown tints of this still life, with her serene looks and every-day apparel. The painter and his subject had, both of them, too much taste to choose the vulgar, full-dress, sitting-for-a-portrait attitude. A certain visionary poetic grace and fitness were in all the adjuncts. The contemplative, pensive look, the serene pale face, the pure, calm, melancholy brow, were rendered with a graceful hand; and the old man named the picture well when he called it the Lily of Mossgray.

"But Hope would not have arranged it so," said Helen, when she had sufficiently

admired the portrait. "Hope would have made a group instead of that single spiritual face."

"And drawn me with breast-plate and rusty spear," said Lilias, "about to set out on a foray; because my name, Mossgray, reminds Hope of the Laird's Jock, and his brethren of the ballad-days."

"Nay," said Helen, "Hope has caught the graceful spirit of the ballads better than that; but she would have changed the scene to the old hall of the tower, and put breast-plate and steel-jack on a brotherhood of Graemes, and placed you, with your pensive look, in the midst, sending them forth, sadly and bravely, not on a foray, but on a truer errand, if it were to the Flodden that needed them. And I think almost that this same face, with that breath of sadness about it, might have suited the

old hall well, and the armed men who were going forth, with a peradventure that they would never return; and the Lily of Mossgray would do honour to Hope's fancy, if the painter had thought of her as the Laird's Lilias."

As she ceased, she slightly turned her head. The banker was looking in eagerly—looking at her. As their eyes met, both withdrew hastily; Helen with a tingling thrill of shy pride, and Mr. Oswald with a complication of feelings difficult to describe. Strong determination not to yield, strangely mingled with an absolute *liking* for the girl who praised his Hope so kindly, and to whom Hope clung with such affection. It was a very sudden feeling, but his eyes followed her unawares, almost with pride. William, too, was looking proudly after the rapid figure in the distance. Hope,

at home, was thinking proudly, that no one in Fendie or in Edinburgh was like Helen Buchanan; and the banker, in his secret heart, acknowledged that they were right, while again he repeated his resolution—never!

CHAPTER XVI.

"He's gentle—of all sorts beloved—and indeed much in the heart of the world."

AS YOU LIKE IT.

HALBERT GRAEME was fully bent upon obeying the injunctions of his kinsman, and had already, thanks to his youthful strength, high spirits, and grey pony, made considerable acquaintance with his ancestral country. There were various good neighbours too who showed all willingness to aid him, and the race of young gentlemen who

wrote themselves "younger of" all the castles and towers, shaws, braes, and holms of the district, opened their ranks with all imaginable pleasure to admit Halbert, "younger of Mossgray." Halbert was happy in a frank temper, and no great share of ideality. His list of acquaintance grew like Jonah's gourd. The fame of him went up the water and down the water; from the county-town some fifteen miles away, to the furthest bounds of the Scottish border, the landed community of the fair Southern shire had heard of the new heir of the Graemes. Nor was it alone the landed community; Halbert, like Hope Oswald, extended his friendship beyond his own exclusive class. Robbie Carlyle, the fisherman, grasped his bonnet when he met "the young laird" with a fervent salutation only accorded to his favourites, and John

Brown in the excitement of a busy market-day in the thronged Main Street of Fendie, proclaimed him: "Nane o' your whillie-whaws—just a real, decent lad that kens a man o' sense when he sees him!"

There were one or two dissentients. On a January day, Halbert, escorting Lilias on a walk longer than was usual to her, had the evil fortune to pass a potatoe field—a field which *had* borne potatoes—where Robert Paterson, the farmer of Whinnyside, was indolently superintending his two ploughs. It was a small farm, and its tenant was no great agriculturist. He "hadna just made up his mind what the crap was to be. Some said there wasna muckle dependence to be putten on the taties, where they had ance turned out bad—though his had been no that ill, the year—and some said the taties, noo, in thir times, paid better

than the corn—and some said naithing paid ava; for his pairt he didna ken; he hadna made up his mind."

Halbert was very active, and had a considerable share of the respectable qualities called sense and prudence. So he suggested to the good man of Whinnyside, that he was employing the most effectual means for securing that "naething should pay ava," a reproof which did exceedingly offend and amaze the indignant Robert.

"He's a bonnie ane, indeed!" said the angry farmer when Halbert had passed on, "to gie advice to a man that might be his faither—forbye being born on the land. I hae nae broo o' thae keen Norlands. Ane would think they were learnt to put this and that thegither afore they were breekit—and the greed o' them! considering and planning how to make the maist o' every-

thing; as if there was nocht to be done in this world but gather gear!"

But Robert Paterson was alone in his dissent—in all the district the feeling was strong in favour of the Norland Halbert.

Halbert and Lilias were going by Mossgray's favourite walk, up the waterside. The two adopted children of Mossgray were very good friends; so good friends, Mrs. Mense thought, that they would quite naturally settle down into the characters of laird and lady, and give Mossgray no further trouble; but altogether irrespective of the broken golden coin which hung from Halbert's neck, and the solitary labourer in the East who toiled for Lilias, there were other preventives of which Mrs. Mense was quite unaware. Lilias was a great deal older, graver, and more experienced than her young squire; though there was not much difference in

positive age, but in that developement and maturity of the mind which will not be confined to years. Halbert unconsciously looked up to the young Lilias as to his senior, and Lilias used terms of kindly familiarity to Halbert as to an ingenuous, pleasant younger brother. It was the best thing possible for their frank and friendly intercourse, but entirely destructive to the hopes of Mrs. Mense.

The road along the waterside was a pleasant one, though the trees were bare and though it ascended and descended steep braes now and then, and there were places here and there, where the path was very nearly a rustic stair, with interwoven roots for steps. The neighbourhood of Fendie is the very stronghold of burns—you meet them running cheerily through the country like hardy cottage children at every turn,

and multitudes of those fairy tributaries swell the noble dark-brown water as it sweeps downward to the Firth. Yonder does one pour down foaming, over the rugged bank of broken rock and gathered stones, high over which that daring stripling birch waves its thin branches, half timorous, half exultant; and here another, softly stealing under cover of the long melancholy willows glides noiselessly, a gentle child, into the bosom of the river. Another—and see how this kind alder kneels upon the mimic headland, shadowing the little bay where its coy wavelets linger—and yet another—with its wild headlong rush, defying those great stones, and jostling the roots of the shrinking beech which somehow has fallen here, and grows patiently and resigned, to its full height, a little timid of its impetuous neighbour. But the name of these children of

the hills is legion; listen—you would fancy a school had newly "skailed" so full is the air of their ceaseless singing; and if you dwell among them but a little time, you will learn to know their individual voices, and to name them by separate names as you name human children.

The water itself is broad and full, "from bank to brae," and flows down with a strong life in it, pleasant and hopeful to see; that ample, wide stream, instinct with the easy unostentatious force of nature—you can fancy as it hastens on, that the bold current throbs, like the beating of a strong man's breast.

Winding yonder through the trees—here, sweeping round that soft swelling grassy bank, and again a little further on over-arched by those long bare, far-spreading boughs. Beyond itself there is little prospect, for the

trees on every side, shut in theview, delicately revealing their naked tracing against the sky, with heavy firs and pines keeping some show of verdure in the skeleton wood.

But Halbert and Lilias were not thinking of views, except of those eager, hopeful human ones, which rose so vividly before the youth's eyes; for Halbert was explaining his own wishes, and intentions, and craving the good counsel of the Lily of Mossgray.

"I should have very much preferred my father's profession," said the young man, "and Mr. Monikie told me Mossgray was willing that I should study for the bar if I chose; but, Mossgray has supported me all my life, Lilias. I could not think of remaining a burden on him."

"And was that your sole reason?" asked his grave and sagacious counsellor.

The honest Halbert blushed, and smiled, and hesitated.

"Well, perhaps it would not be quite true if I said it was the sole reason; but it certainly was an important one."

"And the others?" inquired Lilias with a smile.

"The others? they were various; for instance, I am not by any means sure that I have the necessary gifts—so few men can speak well in public; and—it must always be a slow success I fancy, the success of an advocate; when one has a rank to maintain, and very little to maintain it—"

Halbert looked very prudent and careful as he paused.

"And you want to succeed quickly, Halbert," said Lilias, "and so will choose some gainful business rather than the learned profession—is that it?"

"To tell the truth," said Halbert hastily, "I am anxious to be settled as soon as possible; to establish myself; to have a home; you understand me, Lilias?"

Lilias looked at the youth's glowing face and smiled.

"Did you never think you were too young, Halbert, to be the head of a house?"

"Too young!" Halbert was half inclined to be angry. "Come, Lilias, that is not fair; and then you know, I have no friends, no relations; I am alone."

Lilias became suddenly grave; but as she looked again at the young, frank face beside her, in its flush of early manhood, another smile, kindly and gentle, stole over her lip. To be alone—to have no friends—the joyous Halbert with his light spirit, and honest straightforward character, and lack of the ideal and sensitive, did by no means un-

derstand what these words meant. He could find a Menie Monikie everywhere, he could never be alone.

"You were not alone in Aberdeenshire," said Lilias; "and, I fancy you will be bringing this pretty Menie to Mossgray by and bye, Halbert. Is that what being settled means?"

Halbert stammered a happy half denial, which was a confession, and proceeded in very high spirits to ask Lilias what she thought he should do.

"I think you should wait," said his adviser, "till Mossgray gives you the counsel you asked from him. You may remind him of it, Halbert, but I think you should not press our good friend; we may have all confidence in the kindness of Mossgray."

Halbert fully assented. The old man

had charmed all doubts from the mind of the young one, and with a light heart and perfect content, he left his anxieties in his kinsman's hand.

Lilias had never ventured so far before, and now their course was suddenly stayed by a deep cavernous burn, rumbling far down, under a long avenue of very large saugh or willow trees. The foliage of these was so exuberant in summer that the hoarse water below scarcely ever saw the sun; and over it was an old dilapidated bridge—rude planks of wood, fenced on each side by stiles, and so decayed as to seem unsafe. Halbert parted the thick willow branches with his hand to look through; and beyond, they saw, half buried in a wilderness of trees the roof and gables of a house. Lilias had heard of this place so often that she knew at once what it was.

"I am afraid this is scarcely safe for you," said Halbert. "Shall we have to return, Lilias? though I confess I should like to explore this place. Does anybody live in that wilderness, I wonder."

"I fancy it must be Murrayshaugh," said Lilias. She spoke low; there was something which excited her reverence in the melancholy decay, and loneliness of the old house, and the unknown fate of its owners. "Let us go nearer, Halbert; the bridge must be safe enough."

It was not very safe, yet it bore the light weight of Lilias, and quivered beneath the springing bound of Halbert; they were within the enclosure of Murrayshaugh.

The house was less irregular and less extensive than Mossgray. Its former proprietors in their prosperous time, had not

chosen to establish themselves on the bleak far-seeing mount, where the remains of the ancient peel were now mouldering stone by stone: and this house decayed as it was, had some architectural pretensions. Its taper spear-like turrets shot up through the bewildering maze of wood in which it was enclosed, and the mossy terrace stretching along its front, gave some distinctness to its form below. A very narrow grass-grown path wound past a rounded gable to some back entrance; and the former flower-beds bordering the way, bore now a scanty crop of vegetables—except this all was perfectly neglected; but the few cabbages and leeks, and a thin ascending breath of smoke, and a gentle aroma of peats told that somewhere about the solitary house, there was humanity, and its attendant spirit, the fire.

"Did you ever hear of this place, Halbert?" said Lilias, as they stood beside the great window in the gable, looking into a large, faded melancholy room, which bore evident marks of care and order, solitary and desolate though it was.

Halbert looked a little astonished.

"I have never before been at Mossgray," he answered, "and at home—I mean in the North—these border counties were very Antipodes to us."

Lilias did not answer; she looked thoughtfully along the green, melancholy terrace, thinking of Lucy Murray in her solitude, and of Charlie Graeme the household traitor, whose honest, fresh, ingenuous son had never heard of Murrayshaugh.

The faint sound of a lifted latch aroused her attention and she looked round. A

little old woman, with impatient, vivacious features and quick pattering steps came along the grassgrown path. She had heard voices without, and had issued forth in evident wrath to avenge the intrusion on her territory.

"Oh, mem, I beg your pardon!" she exclaimed as she made a dead stop in front of Lilias. "If I didna think it was Robbie Carlyle's cuddie and that tinkler of a callant, Peter, chasing him! but ye'll be the young lady of Mossgray?"

Lilias took the designation with a smile.

"This is Murrayshaugh, is it not?" she asked.

But the little woman's eyes were so busy that she lost the question. She was examining with singular curiosity the face of Halbert Graeme.

"This is Murrayshaugh?" repeated Lilias.

"Ay, it's Murrayshaugh," was the answer emphatically given, while the speaker looked wrathfully at Halbert Graeme.

Halbert was considerably astonished; but the unconscious natural prepossessing smile remained upon his truthful face. It was a very honest straightforward countenance; what we call "aefauld," in Scotland —and the old woman gradually melted under the frank good-humoured smile.

"They ca' me Eesabell Broun," she said abruptly, "and I keep the house. I've lived here, a' my days, and if ye would like to see it, I've nae objections."

"If we will not trouble you too much," said Lilias, smiling at the limited permission, "I shall be glad to see Murrayshaugh."

Eesabell turned away at once, and went

pattering round to a not very elegant back door. Her visitors followed her.

"Na—na," said the old woman, fretfully waving them back with her quick, withered hand; "we may be puir, and puir eneugh, but there shall nae gentle come this gate into Murrayshaugh; gae round to the ither side; ye'll get in by the richt door."

It was a respectable irritation, and the two young explorers turned with some amusement to obey. The great door of Murrayshaugh was somewhat heavy on its rusted hinges; the opening of it taxed all the impatient strength of Isabell Brown.

There was not much to see within; everything saleable had been removed from those cold, dreary, uninhabited walls before the armed man, Want, drove its last tenant from his father's house. So much furniture

as remained was old and faded; the haughty, proud old man had studiously displayed its poverty; he professed to disdain the mean art of making shifts to hide it—it was the bitter art of unbending pride which left its forlorn nakedness so visible to every eye.

But the little, quick, irrascible custodier of the lonely house had been so long used to the poverty of its scanty furniture that she was now unconscious of it; and when she carefully dusted the high-backed chairs of "Miss Lucy's parlour," and closed the shutters lest the sun should spoil the colours of the decayed worn carpet, whose colours had been jumbled in incoherent old age when she herself was but a child, Eesabell Brown was perfectly sincere. She had a veneration for those solitary and quiet inhabitants of the

house in which she had lived all her days; they were older dwellers than she; and when she thought of the "Miss Lucy" who had been the pattern and glory of her younger days returning to Murrayshaugh—and she did think of it constantly—it was still as Miss Lucy—the fair, *young* lady whom in her own girlhood she thought chief of women. This was the romance of the little old housekeeper of Murrayshaugh. She had known few fluctuations of fortune since the great era of their departure; somehow or other Isabell herself had grown old; but unchangeable as the high-backed chairs and the faded carpets seemed Murrayshaugh and Miss Lucy—and they would return.

"My mother was housekeeper when the laird and Miss Lucy gaed to foreign pairts," she said to Lilias. "Ye'll have heard o'

Miss Lucy?—ay, but I question if ye ever saw the like o' her. Wasna auld Greenshaw your grandfather? I thocht that. Weel, Miss Lucy gaed herself, ance errant, to see your mother, to please Mossgray."

Isabell said this with great importance; but Lilias was not overawed, though her face was very grave.

"There's no a young lady atween this and her, wherever she be," continued the old woman with vehemence, "that it wadna be an honour to even to Miss Lucy, though them that should have kent, didna ken."

A quick indignant glance at the young man, accompanied this speech; but the glance of Isabell's wrath was harmless lightning to the unconscious Halbert.

"Me and my sister Jean were brought up here," said Isabell, more calmly, "and she

was married upon a cousin o' our ain:—maybe ye ken John Broun that's at the Mount—that's Jean's son."

"He is my earliest acquaintance in Fendie," said Halbert, good-humouredly, "and an honest fellow he is; but why do they leave you alone here?"

"My lane!" said Isabell; "am I no housekeeper? and us disna ken the day that Murrayshaugh may come hame!"

Lilias checked Halbert with her lifted hand; the old woman's delusion was sacred.

They had entered "Miss Lucy's parlour," and were looking at some pictures on the wall. Before the first of these, that of a young man in an antique dress, evidently an old family portrait, Lilias paused with a sudden start. There was a vivid colour and

surprised animation on her face such as Halbert had never seen her have before, and the tone of her voice struck him as she turned to ask about the picture—low, full and musical, as if the heart throbbed through it more warmly than was its wont.

"It's ane o' the auld Murrays—I dinna mind his name," said Isabell; "but Miss Lucy had a conceit that it was like Mr. Hew. They were a' like ither; the same face came down, like the name, frae faither to son. That ane was a Hew too, I dinna doubt; it's a guid name; they maun a' have been fond o't."

"Hew," repeated Lilias, slowly, as if she too loved to linger on the sound; "Hew—yes, it is a pleasant name."

And she turned again with lingering looks and smiles of strange pleasure to the picture as she left the room. Halbert smiled

too in wonder. He hardly could fancy an appropriate cause for such emotion in the wise, grave Lilias; and there was no such magic in any picture there for him.

CHAPTER XVII.

"He thinks well of himself, Sir—we all do it; and he thinks well of his fortune—happy he who can! and if myself am well, and my fortune is well, who shall resist me?"

OLD PLAY.

THE Manse of Fendie was a good-sized, substantial house situated at the rural end of the Main Street with very tolerable grounds about it, and a well-stocked, extensive garden behind. Within, there were three good sitting-rooms—dining-room, drawing-room,

and library as the Reverend Robert Insches was pleased to call them. His predecessor had been a man of good family and small pretensions. In his time the library was only a study, and the drawing-room a family parlour; but the Reverend Robert had changed all that.

The furniture was all new, as it was natural that the furniture of a young man's house should be, but it had a brassy look not very agreeable to the eye. The chairs stood so stiffly in their grim gentility, the carpets were so spotless, the tables so bright, that you felt afraid to disturb their solemn repose by presuming to make them serve the purposes of ordinary life; but if a stranger feared them, tenfold was the dread with which their dignified stillness impressed Miss Insches the little, fat, roundabout sister of the Reverend Robert. With awe and

reverence, she herself with her own plump hands dusted the sacred drawing-room; with fear for her own presumption, gingerly sat on the extreme edge of one of those wonderful rosewood chairs, when the drawing-room on solemn occasions was used. The Reverend Robert angrily lectured her for this foible; it was in vain. Miss Inches could not be otherwise than reverential of "the grand furniture."

The library was the smaller room of the three. You could not have guessed it was a library, had not the minister's sister been at pains to inform you. There was a small bookcase in it, veiled with curtains within the glass doors, and a study table; in the reign of the last minister it had been overflowing in all its corners with books—at present it was much too trimly arranged for

that. The room had to do double duty; it was parlour as well as study. There, Miss Inches sat, holding in her breath on the Fridays and Saturdays lest she should disturb Robert at his preparations; and there in the earlier days of the week when Robert had no sermons to write, the elderly, worshipping sister, and the young idol brother, were very comfortable together. The young man was a genius in his way, and preached as no one had preached in Fendie for long years before. Save for the one weakness of making a hobby of his "position," indeed, he had good sense and good feeling as well as talent, and promised to be noticeable in his generation. Only the sudden change from the hard student life and cares of poverty, to the good stipend and much prized "station" of Fendie, had a

little dazzled the eyes of the Reverend Robert, and like other young men, he rode his hobby hard and furiously.

At the fireside in the "library" his sister and he sat together; there was some consternation in the plump, good-humoured face of Miss Insches. She was evidently bewildered—"a party!"

"You know, Janet, I don't, by any means, intend a formal large party," said the Reverend Robert, who had been for the last ten minutes, vainly endeavouring to convey a less magnificent idea of his intention to his sister's perplexed mind. "A few friends merely—a few of your own friends—it is necessary you know, that we should not show ourselves unsocial."

"My own friends?" Miss Insches was rather obtuse. "There's the provost's wife, and there's Miss Rechie Sinclair, and Mrs.

Irving of Friarsford—is't them you're meaning, Robert?"

Robert was impatient.

"I am sure, Janet, you can have no pleasure in the company of a vulgar person like Mrs. Irving—and the provost's wife—I don't like her, you know;—and Miss Rechie—well, she's a good little woman—but she would be quite out of place in my drawing-room, surely."

Miss Inches looked awed and reverential. It was very true that these plebeian personages would not at all suit the Reverend Robert's dignified drawing-room, of which she herself was only a tenant at will, liable to be ejected whenever it should please its lord and master to bring home a wife.

"And our Robert's a fine-looking lad, as well as a clever," said Miss Insches under her breath; "he might marry onybody he likit."

"Maybe it would be best to tell me, Robert," she said aloud humbly, "what folk you were thinking to ask—and then I would ken."

"Well, Janet," said the minister graciously, "there's Mr. Halbert Graeme, and Miss Maxwell of Mossgray."

Miss Inches lifted up her hands in the extremity of her astonishment.

"The young lady of Mossgray!"

"Why not?" exclaimed the Reverend Robert, indignantly impatient. "I am astonished, Janet;—you forget my position —you forget—"

"No me, Robert—no me," ejaculated his penitent sister.

"And I suppose we must have some of the brethren," continued Robert after a pause. "There's Mr. Wright of the *quoad sacra* at Fairholm; but then we could not

ask him without his wife, and she—you know he made a very foolish marriage."

"Ay," responded Miss Insches promptly; "he married Willie Tasker the joiner's daughter, at Todholes, a bonnie-like wife for a minister. Weel, Robert, maybe I am not proud enough, but I would have you marry naebody but a lady."

The Reverend Robert blushed a little.

"Do you know, Janet, little Hope Oswald has a theory that ladies are not made but born—not what you call well-born however; suppose we call on Mrs. Wright and see what sort of a person she is. Wright has been very foolish no doubt, but if we can consistently notice him, we should—" Mr. Insches drew himself up, and thought of Mossgray's graceful courtesy to the solitary Helen.

Miss Insches was decidedly repugnant—

she had no toleration for the *mésalliances* of ministers.

"And there is Paulus Whyte," continued the Reverend Robert. "He is to preach for me on the fast day, so we can have it the night before; and, by the bye, Janet, there is a young lady in Fendie, a great friend of Miss Maxwell's. What is her name again? Buchanan, yes, Buchanan—you must ask her."

"You're no meaning the schoolmistress?" said Miss Insches.

The Reverend Robert faltered a little—only a little—he was reassured by remembering the kindly attentions of Mossgray.

"Yes, I believe she does keep a school; but she is very intimate with Miss Maxwell—you must ask her."

"Weel," said Miss Insches with some astonishment. "I am sure I dinna object;

but to you to ask the schoolmistress among thae big folk, Robert! and maybe she'll no like to come—she's but young, puir thing—when the maister of the house is a young man."

"Oh," said the minister with a hasty blush, "she will never think of me. You must ask her to meet Miss Maxwell."

Miss Insches looked somewhat suspicious; she did not understand this; besides she had heard her brother speak of Helen before, and now he hesitated at her name as if he did not recollect it. "I dinna ken what Robert means," she muttered to herself as he left the room. "I am sure he kens the lassie well enough; what for could he no mind her name? Weel, to be sure, he's the minister—but if he were ony ither man, I would hae my ain thoughts about it."

And her ain thoughts Miss Insches had, minister though her brother was; but the will of Robert was not to be contested, so his suspicious sister prepared herself for obedience.

A still further test of obedience he required from her that very afternoon: but then, too, Robert conquered, and they set out together to call on the new Mrs. Wright of the Fairholm chapel of ease.

The Reverend Simon Wright was, like the Reverend Robert Inches of plebeian origin, but unlike his younger, more graceful, and more talented neighbour, he was by no means adapted for the profession of gentleman. He too had a sort of sluggish, heavy ambition, though it had not reached the altitude of Robert's; but his marriage had sentenced him hopelessly to his original standing. It was barely possible that he

might have struggled upward alone, but there was no elevating the dead weight of his wife. For himself he had a ponderous unserviceable mind, not without a certain power, and after his own fashion could preach good sermons sometimes; but generally, the man was an incapable man, slow to perceive, and helpless to take advantage of his opportunities. Willie Tasker, the joiner, had given him lodgings for a month or two, while his staring, red, boxlike manse was being built, and the result was that Willie Tasker's daughter became the minister's wife.

To the immense indignation of his neighbours and people all and sundry, who felt in the degradation of their minister a personal injury, and who having expressed their disapprobation of the courtship by various very decided demonstrations, were now keeping aloof, and refusing to notice

the new wife. Still more indignant were the wives of "the brethren" in the vicinity, at this intruder into their ranks. They, all of them, discovered suddenly that without a conveyance it was impossible to pay visits; and "we do not keep a conveyance." The inference was unmistakeable; it was not in their power to call on Mrs. Wright.

Miss Insches fully shared in the general indignation, but she was not without curiosity; so with proper condescension and as a duty, she agreed to accompany her brother.

The best room of the Fairholm Manse had two windows; it stood rather high, and was approached by a road which one of these windows commanded, so as, very conveniently to warn the inhabitants of the rare advent of visitors. As they opened the gate, a sturdy maid servant stared at them for a

moment—answered Mr. Insches in the affimative, when he inquired if her mistress was at home, and precipitately fled to the back door, leaving the visitors to find the more dignified entrance at their leisure. They had to pass the windows of the "best room;" within, sitting as gingerly as ever Miss Insches sat, in a parlour by no means so fine as the sacred drawing-room, they had a first glimpse of the bride. She saw them looking for the door in some confusion, but she sat bolt upright in her new dignity, with her hands crossed in her lap, and her eyes fixed upon the opposite wall, and made no sign.

"The woman's daft," muttered Miss Insches, "could she no let folk in? Mrs. Whyte that's a lady born is no ower grand to open the door."

The Reverend Robert laughed, not without

some secret shame; it was a good lesson and did him service. He began to see the vulgarity of this assumption; his own natural taste had kept himself within bounds, anxious as he was to maintain the decorums which he fancied necessary to his "position;" but this was sufficiently ludicrous to make him ashamed of the stiff gentility to which he had been endeavouring to train his good-humoured sister. His heavy brother of Fairholm was labouring to *make* his wife a lady—a very impossible process as her appearance showed.

She had a soft large face, a drooping head, a tall, gawky person—and when the handsome Mr. Insches and his cheerful sister seated themselves beside her, she giggled. Miss Insches talked, and so did the Reverend Robert: the bride answered by a hysteric titter. It was her sole accomplishment.

She had by no means a gift for conversation, but she could giggle to perfection.

Mr. Wright came to the rescue, in his own person, and by means of ecclesiastical subjects a long half hour was spent; but Robert made no mention of the intended party. He was by no means proud of having made acquaintance with the bride.

"Robert," said Miss Insches solemnly as they left the house, "whatever ye do, dinna gang and break our hearts with a gawky like yon. I'm no caring for siller; but man, Robert, if ye canna get a lady, dinna take up with a fule!"

The Reverend Robert smiled—pleasantly before his eyes glided the graceful nervous figure, with its swift motions, and springing step, and eloquent face. Secretly in his own mind, he did at that moment elect the poor schoolmistress to the honourable vacant seat

at the head of his dignified table. It was true she was poor, and had for years laboured to earn her own bread; but Helen Buchanan was a gentlewoman born!

In the meantime Helen Buchanan remained perfectly unconscious of her election. Mr. Insches, his good qualities, and his indifferent ones had passed from her mind altogether. She was not even angry at his desertion of her, during the earlier part of that Mossgray party, and met him the next time she saw him after it with a quite unclouded face. If William Oswald had been the offender, the offence would have ruffled in a very different way, the memory of Helen. It was a bad omen for the Reverend Robert.

And William Oswald was gone. He had established himself now, a permanent inhabitant of Edinburgh, practising his profession

as it pleased the public to give him opportunity; and the public was not unpropitious. His father had many connexions in other little towns like Fendie, and Fendie itself was respectably litigious. William Oswald was pronounced "a rising young man," "a sagacious lad," by voices of authority in the sacred precincts of the Parliament House. His prospects were fair and prosperous—the banker began to be proud of his thriving son.

And William began to be heard of in other spheres than the Parliament House. In the Scottish capital as in the English, stout hearts were banding themselves for a holy war, a new Crusade. Against the physical evils which debase the poor, against giant sins which have their absolute dominions mapped out in every city; for wise men began to see how poverty and wretched-

ness, iniquity and pollution, press forward upon the mere barrier of defence set up to oppose their progress, and steadily make away. So one here and there, stung to the heart with one particular evil, and yearning over the masses of unregarded poor, had snatched a flaming brand out of the slow consuming fire, and holding it up above his head, in earnestness almost wild, had begged and prayed his fellows to look upon the ghastly sight below. Little perishing outcast children, trained, as one could fancy by malignant spirits only, to breath in crime like daily air. Strong men sinking—sinking—into woe and misery ineffable, binding themselves with those green withes of customary sin, which by and bye should harden into chains of iron. Women, woe of woes, lost without hope; and good men had united themselves in an aggressive war, to go forth against all the

powers of darkness—not simply to defend, but to invade and rout and conquer, holding no terms or parley with the might of sin.

The fluttering flush came and went over Helen's cheek, as she read eagerly the doings of this new chivalry of Scotland. Her breast swelled—her heart beat. William was among them, bearing arms like a true man.

The Reverend Robert had no chance against this: the young man had strayed further from the East than he need have done, and though performing his ministerial work well and conscientiously, did by no means project his very heart into it, or live for it as his chief end. He also was a good man and a Christian; but from his life you would have fancied that the ardent rejoicing might of labour, which ensures success in any other profession

was misplaced in his—that the work of all others in which every moment is solemn and weighty, was the one work which should be done in deliberate calmness—for he was not aggressive. He lamented over existing evils, but he did not bravely, and at once, attack them. He was content to be a matter-of-course minister—as good as his neighbours, moving along in a sort of mechanical respectable way. He was not yet roused to feel himself standing alone, with God his master over him, and the whole world lying in wickedness—to be saved.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"I am bid forth to supper."

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

It was the evening of Miss Insches' party, and two of her guests were already comfortably established in the sacred drawing-room. Next day was the fast day in Fendie, and the Reverend Paulus Whyte was to preach. Mr. Insches was rather a favourite with Mrs. Whyte. She had been persuaded to accompany her husband, and was to remain all night at the Manse.

Mr. Whyte was seated in an easy chair, talking in a low, gentle, pleasant voice, to the very attentive Miss Insches. He was a little man, with courteous graceful manners, and a very mild engaging face. No tongue, however slanderous, could find matter of accusation against Paulus Whyte; friend and foe alike did unconscious homage to the pure unselfish spirit which dwelt among them in its peaceful mildness—a visible citizen of heaven. He was one of those few men whose especial gift seems holiness; you heard all classes, the religious and the profane, do reverence to the distinguishing quality of the gentle minister. He was a holy man.

He had one weakness—a failing incident to his guileless benevolent nature. He was a little too apt to write biographies of very good little boys, who died at eight or nine in

the odour of sanctity, and little girls who, at a like age, were experienced in all the difficulties and temptations of the spiritual life. On the counters of religious booksellers, you were continually picking up little books in coloured covers, memorials of the last small pious Jane or William who had died within the good minister's ken. In the simplicity of his own gentle nature, he received all the traits of childish goodness, which weeping mothers and aunts told him when their first grief began to soften; and rejoicing in "the holiness of youth," recorded the little incidents of those young lives for the edification of all. They were not always to edification; but the good man fervently believed them so, and in his own devout heart gave thanks joyfully for the youthful angels of whom he had registered so many. There were some who smiled at the weak-

ness, and some who sneered at its fruits; but few men sneered at Paulus Whyte. His garments were too spotless—his serene life too pure for any reproaches of the adversary.

His wife was a vivacious, lively, cheerful person, pleasantly patronizing to all youthful people. She liked young society, and she liked to take such as suited her under her wing, and bring them forward, and encourage them by all kindly means. She was chatting in her own cheerful, sprightly way, with Robert Insches, who held a high place in her favour. She was bent at present on providing him with that indispensable equipment for all young ministers—a wife—and had plans of her own on the subject, of which Robert had a considerable guess; but Robert conquered himself, had full

confidence in the fascination of Helen, and felt sure of the ultimate approval of Mrs. Whyte.

The first arrival was a sister of Mrs. Whyte's, a widow lady resident at Fendie. She was a querulous person, constitutionally inclined to look at the dark side of everything, a perfect contrast to the happier temper of her sister, but withal not destitute of a kindred kindliness. Only the youthful people patronized by Mrs. Gray, were sedulously tutored into a melancholy certainty of the inevitable miseries of the world. She tried, good gloomy woman, to charge the natural atmosphere of hope with the vapoury fears in which she herself found a certain sombre satisfaction, and now and then, she was temporarily successful.

The drawing-room was not very much

crowded. Besides these, there were only Lilias, Halbert, Helen, and the banker Oswald and his wife.

The last two were invited by Mr. Insches for some unexplained reason. They were certainly his very good friends, but that was not the cause; he had many good friends in Fendie quite as eligible; but the Reverend Robert had once or twice encountered William in the immediate vicinity of Mrs. Buchanan's house, and had an idea that his rival, like himself, was kept back by scruples of pride, or by consideration of what "the world" would say. Consequently, William's parents were invited to-night to show them that the step was taken, that the dignified youthful minister had made up his mind, and that Helen was about to be elevated to the lofty position of Mistress of the Manse.

Helen herself, who had come with some reluctance, felt already uncomfortably hampered by her host's attentions; there was a slight ostentation in them—a certain consciousness of derogation on his own part, and fear for her, lest the exaltation should dazzle her. Helen kept closely by the side of Lilias, amused, afraid, and suspecting some design upon her.

Mrs. Oswald seated herself beside the young friends. The banker kept apart, struggling very vainly against the curiosity which turned his eyes towards this group; he began to feel an interest in watching the colour fluctuate and change on Helen's cheek, and to understand the half-suppressed, impatient motion and altered attitude which testified some annoyance under those elaborate courtesies of Robert Insches. Mr. Oswald was sadly inconsistent; he had

a certain satisfaction in perceiving that these courtesies did not seem particularly acceptable to Helen.

"My dear," said the plaintive Mrs. Gray, addressing Lilias, "I am glad to see you looking so much stronger; but perhaps you are flushed—just a little flushed to-night; you must be very careful as you go home, that you don't take cold."

"I heard Mrs. Mense making a great provision of cloaks for my home-going," said Lilias, smiling; "they are too careful of me, Mrs. Gray. I shall not take cold if my good friends can guard me from it."

"Well," said Mrs. Gray, "this is a strange world; you will see trouble coming often to those who are most carefully guarded, while others who can use no precautions escape it altogether. Ay, Miss

Insches, you may well shake your head; I have seen such things myself."

Miss Insches had indeed shaken her head sympathetically, because the good-humoured little woman thought some assent was necessary; but on being thus involved as an interlocutor, she looked very guilty and confused, and was by no means sure whether she should have done it or no.

"But why speak of it so drearily, Agnes?" said Mr. Whyte, who, mild man as he was, gave his sister-in-law's doleful moods no quarter. "I can see cause for nothing but thankfulness in that. That Providence specially cares for those who cannot care for themselves; it is positive sunshine to think of it."

"Ay," said Mrs. Gray mournfully, "the minister and I always take different views;

but you'll allow, Paulus, what the Bible says its very self of this weary world. A vale of tears—a shadow that fleeth away—the valley of the shadow of death."

"My dear Agnes," said the vivacious Mrs. Whyte, with some impatience, "I wish you would quote the chapter and verse, for I really have no recollection of the vale of tears in Scripture."

"Elizabeth," answered Mrs. Gray, with solemnity, "the dark day has not fallen upon you yet, and I hope it may be long deferred; but it is a heavy life. The very best of it is just a succession of work and fatigue, waking and sleeping, weariness and rest. I see you agree with me, Mr. Oswald. We are in a miserable world, and the sooner we are done with it, the better for ourselves."

The banker, thus appealed to, looked as

much amazed as Miss Insches; he did by no means agree with Mrs. Gray, but he was somewhat slow of speech, and could not manage to express his sentiments. There was a certain orthodoxy, too, in this view of the matter; so the honest man hesitated and looked confused, and not knowing what to say, finally said nothing.

"And Miss Buchanan, my dear," said Mrs. Gray, with an affectionate sadness, "I see I have you on my side."

"Oh no, no, no," said Helen eagerly, in the tremulous low voice which she always spoke in, when she was greatly moved; a voice, more than half reverie, broken now and then abruptly by a consciousness of being listened to.

"No?"

"There is nothing miserable in it," said Helen, forgetting herself, and speaking

rapidly, and so low that the banker needed to bend forward before he could hear; "nothing but what we *make;* I think the words should be noble and grand rather, in all its light and all its gloom. It is very dark sometimes. I know there are eclipses and thunder-clouds; but not miserable—no, no. It does not become us—surely it does not become us to make its changes matters of sadness; for the labour's sake it is good to rest, and the labour itself—I think sometimes that if we had no other blessing, *that* would be great enough to rejoice in all our days—to have work to do under the sunshine of heaven—work for the Master—the King! I do not know; I think there is no grief that can match the joy of this."

The nervous small fingers were clasped together, the unquiet face looking into the

vacant air with shining, abstracted eyes, the head erected in eager enthusiasm; and bending forward as if to a magnet, the banker Oswald looked on.

Lilias Maxwell laid her hand gently on Helen's clasped fingers. There was an instantaneous change: the erect head fell into its ordinary stoop, the eyes were cast down, the figure shrank back shy and trembling, and Mr. Oswald drew a long breath, and threw himself back in his chair, as the Reverend Robert brought down the tone of the conversation to the commonplace and prosaic, by saying, with some emphasis:

"I perfectly agree with Miss Buchanan."

Mrs. Gray had been somewhat startled. Mr. Insches set her right again. She shook her head.

"Ah, young people, young people; it is

quite natural, no doubt; but you don't know—you will find it out only too soon."

Mr. Whyte rose from his chair with some displeasure, and lifted his fine hand in admonition.

"Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say unto you rejoice!"

The animation of his words lighted up his gentle face; not alone in the sunshine and in the fair earth, but in the Lord with whom was the wonderful "fellowship" of the holy man. It was meet that there should be gladness in all his peaceful life, for this was its charm and spell.

Mrs. Whyte changed her seat. She took the chair which Mrs. Gray left vacant beside Lilias and Helen, to the great contentment of the Reverend Robert.

"I warn you, young ladies, against my

sister," said Mrs. Whyte, cheerfully. "Agnes has had a great deal of grief herself, and she thinks it is the common lot, and is anxious to prepare others for all that befel her. She means it very kindly, though I think she is mistaken; but, Miss Maxwell, you must not adopt these melancholy views of hers—it is quite soon enough to be sorrowful when sorrow comes."

"You warn *me*, Mrs. Whyte," said Lilias, smiling. "Have you no fear for Helen?"

"No, Miss Buchanan has quite reassured me," said Mrs. Whyte; "and I am not sure that I should at any time have feared for her so much as for you. Is not Mossgray very quiet—shall I say dull? We have an idea that your guardian is a melancholy man, Miss Maxwell."

"No, indeed, no," said Lilias. "He likes

to be alone, and is a thoughtful man, but Mossgray is not melancholy—if melancholy means anything like unhappiness. He may be pensive as the stars are — but not sad — never gloomy. You think so, Helen?"

Helen assented in a single word, for she had been led into saying far more than she intended before, and was considerably ashamed and embarrassed now; especially as the Reverend Robert was drawing up his stately figure close beside her, and Mrs. Whyte looked interested and curious.

"You must come to the Manse and see me, Miss Buchanan," said Mrs. Whyte, "when the days are longer. I shall expect you often, mind, and we are really rather attractive people; besides myself, you know,

there is Paulus, whom everybody has a kindness for, and two treasures of bairns. You will like Paulus," continued the minister's wife, glancing at him with a kindly smile, as he sat talking to Mrs. Oswald: "and Paulus would say, I think, that you were not likely to cast out with me, and of course there can be but one opinion about the bairns. I shall expect you, Miss Buchanan, and I shall expect Miss Maxwell. It is not a very long walk, and you will do me a kindness if you come."

The words were easily said, and it was very true that two such guests as Lilias and Helen would most pleasantly relieve the quietness of the Manse of Kirkmay; but they made the heart of the young schoolmistress glad. The delicate perception which gave this special invitation to

her rather than to the well-friended Lilias—the true friendliness and appreciation which could venture to praise to her its own especial household. It is surely true that *words* will rise up hereafter in judgment against us: so well and gracefully as we might heal and cheer and encourage with these magic utterances; so often as we make them poisoned arrows, to pierce, and kill, and wound.

"And I am sure," said Miss Insches, who had been listening with great edification, "it would be a real charity if you would call whiles on me. I might maybe no presume on asking Miss Maxwell, because she's a gey bit from the town, besides being delicate; but as you're so near hand, Miss Buchanan, it wouldna be much trouble, and I would take it real kind. I'm sure Robert

never wearies speaking about you, and he would be as glad as me: for ye see— Eh, is that you, Robert? Was you wanting me?"

Robert had secretly, in vehement shame and anger, pulled his indiscreet sister's sleeve, and the result was, that the innocent Miss Insches turned suddenly round upon him, and revealed the artifice he had used to stay her disclosures. The Reverend Robert blushed to the very hair. Helen shrank back, shyly conscious. Mrs. Whyte cast wicked, intelligent glances at the minister, and Miss Insches, seeing that something was wrong, and that she had blundered, looked about her in bewildered penitence.

"Eh, Robert," she repeated under her breath, "is't me?"

The Reverend Robert was too much annoyed to laugh, but Mrs. Whyte did, as she came to the rescue.

"I think when Paulus has his duty over to-morrow, that you and I must make some calls, Mr. Insches. Miss Buchanan, will you introduce me to your mother; and may I venture, Miss Maxwell, to come as far as Mossgray?"

Lilias answered for both. Miss Insches last master-stroke had entirely silenced Helen.

Halbert all this time had been alone, or nearly so, and now Lilias perceived him at the other end of the room, patiently listening to Mrs. Gray; so there was a general movement to rescue him. Halbert had felt rather *de trop* this evening; he was almost inclined to chime in at first with the

lamentations of the mournful lady; and it was a relief to all parties when Mr. Insches changed places with the young heir of Mossgray.

CHAPTER XIX.

Through the earth there runs a sound
  Music of green nooks and hills,
For Spring, soft-handed, frees the bound
  Rivers and sweet rills
Trickling, singing, from the fountains
All day long they cheer the mountains.

So the warm streams of the heart
  Sometimes 'neath the ice grow chill,
Till the Spring with kindly art
  Wakes the sleeping rill,
And like the brooks, old loves, new flowing,
Stir all fair things to happier growing.

THE spring sunshine began to dawn on the waiting world again. The gentle days

prolonged themselves, lingering out in long, soft, poetic twilights. Lilias Maxwell had been nearly a year at Mossgray.

And Halbert Graeme began to feel himself in great want of some outlet for his young activity. He said little now about the momentous matter which had brought him to Mossgray, and though he did sometimes complain in his letters to the North that the fortune which it was so very necessary to make, was as far in the distance as ever, and that there seemed no prospect of being able to reach even the beginning, Halbert was by no means discontented; this genial country life was natural to him: he only wanted something to do; and after a considerable agitation he attained to that. Mossgray graciously permitted himself to be made an experimental farmer, and with great glee Halbert plunged into the desired labour.

"Nae fears," said the sagacious Saunders Delvie, Mossgray's man, as Mrs. Mense expressed her fears to him, that the strength of "the young Laird" might be taxed too greatly; "it's naething but a maggot. I'll just gie him till he wearies; when he's dune out, he can aye rest when he likes, and that's mair than ye can say for mony a hardworking man. Gie him the length o' his tether; *he'll* tire sooner than anybody else."

"Ay, but Mr. Halbert's an active lad," said the housekeeper; "and so was his father before him; if the tane had but been as innocent as the tither; but ane canna mend what's past."

A frown came darkly over the face of Mossgray's man.

"Ye say weel, neighbour; but an folk canna mend their ill deeds they maun tak

the penalty. If it's but in this world it's weel for themsels, and if it's in another pairt than this, it's a' the mair just and righteous."

"Oh, Saunders Delvie," exclaimed Janet Mense, "ye're a hard man!"

"Maister Charlie Graeme did sair ill to this house," said Mrs. Mense emphatically, "and meant mair than he could do—but for a' that, look at the Laird, Saunders, and learn by him. Is he no making this lad like a son o' Mossgray? is he no doing a' that the kindest father could do for him? but no to speak o' the Laird, Saunders, there's mysel. I likit Miss Lucy Murray weel, and there was never ane but likit Mr. Adam; and baith o' them did that lad's faither do his warst to bring to misery. I am a lone woman, and have nae bairns o' my ain; but the time my heart was warmest and fullest, thae young folk—though they

were gentles, and no like me, were gaun and coming about the house, and I thought mair o' them, than ever I did o' mysel. But for a' the ill he did to them—Saunders, I mind that we need mercy oursels every day, and I can say, Charlie Graeme, I forgive ye."

"Ay," said Saunders Delvie sternly, "but he didna dishonour the honest name that your forbears and you had laboured in puirtith and hard toil to keep free of offence in the sight of God and man. He wasna that near to you, that his shame should be yours to bear, the very time that your ain misery for his sin was rugging at your heart; ye dinna ken—and I seek nocht but to bear my ain burden out of the sicht of man."

His bushy grey eyebrows twitched—his

face was moved; this man too had a history.

"Eh, but Saunders, man!" continued the good old housekeeper with some timidity, "it's no like you—I'm meaning it's no like what we should do to be so hard on the puir lad; mind how young he was; and for a' that he did ance ill, mind that he's your ain."

"I mind;" said Saunders emphatically, while a sudden yearning seemed to contend on his harsh face, with the stern condemnation of justice; "woman, ye dinna ken! If he had been less to me—ay, if he *was* less to me now, think ye I wad have done, what I have done It's nae use speaking; do I no see the tears in the wife's auld e'en morning and nicht? do I no ken wha she's aye thinking o' and yearning ower like a'

weak woman as she is? but I say he shall never cross again the door of the honest house he has brought shame upon—never!"

There was a stern fire in the old man's eye, and he went hastily out to his work as if he felt ashamed of having been drawn into this revelation of his household grief. He was, naturally, a man with very strong and passionate feelings, and one of those harsh and powerful minds, which at any cost of misery to themselves will cling to their severe and abstract conceptions of justice. His only child, a youth of some promise in their humble sphere, had fallen, a few years before into the brutalizing practices of rural vice. He had formed discreditable connexions, involved himself in the worst company that Fendie could afford, and to crown all his offences, had finally

in a moment of temptation, stolen some trifling sum from his master. Saunders and his wife were in the sober meridian of life when they married, and this lad Peter, was the son of their old age, the secret idol of the old man's vehement heart. But no one knew the might of love which the somewhat stern father lavished upon the son; and when his criminal folly came to its climax, the mother, the neighbours, the injured master himself, stood aside with awe while Saunders repudiated and disowned the unhappy culprit. *They* called him harsh and cruel; but the guilty youth himself, even while he trembled under his father's sentence, discovered for the first time the strong love which in its agony, banished him from its home and presence. A kindred strength awoke in the son's undisciplined spirit. Seeing how bitterly the hopes set on his

head had been disappointed, in bitter repentance he turned from the closed door, eager to leave the place of his early sins, and in some strange unknown country, to conquer, by the help of God, himself and his fate. For two long years now, he had been absent —where his father did not know, nor would inquire; and still in the bitterness of the strong love which burned within him, the old man repudiated the prodigal.

Mossgray and his ward were together in the garden: Saunders hastily avoided them, and went to work alone, where no one could see the stern swelling of his heart. It was the great fault of Saunders' own class, that they were obtuse to notice, and slow to punish those sins of youth, so fatal to all goodness which the world is content to call follies. Saunders himself was harshly pure and just; he thought it was something

of this moral blindness, so common among his humble neighbours which made Mossgray receive so kindly the son of Charlie Graeme.

Lilias was leaning on her guardian's arm; they were going to the water side.

"Halbert will make us rich, Lilias," said Mossgray; "I am glad the lad likes work; but I fancy we must come to some decision about him; let me hear what you advise."

"You suffered me to speak of Halbert once before, Mossgray," said Lilias, "while he was as much a stranger to you as to me."

"Yes, I remember I did," said the old man smiling, "and you were very foolishly generous as youthful people are. Must I fall back on my memory for the arguments you used then, Lilias? have you nothing new to advance: are your opinions still the same?"

"I have nothing new to advance save the good qualities which now you know, Mossgray," said Lilias, returning the smile. "Halbert himself—so frank, and simple and manly; there could be no better representative of the old Graemes."

The old man shook his head.

"You are a special pleader, Lilias; you want to rouse what family pride may be in me. Well, granting that Halbert is all you say—manly and frank and simple—and he is so; I acknowledge that my old friend Monikie, and the good healthful atmosphere of the North have done credit to themselves in their pupil—what then? does it follow that Halbert must get my land; must be my heir—my heir—is he like my heir, Lilias?"

"You could not have an heir like yourself Mossgray," said Lilias. "I think you must be alone, and have no successor to rival you;

for nature does not seem to do it. Nature only makes one in a race here and there, who would take up orphans like Halbert and me, and set us in families, under the shelter of his kindness—therefore you will have no heir, Mossgray—none but humanity; and on some other spirit, in some other country your mantle will fall when you yourself use it no longer; for you will have no heir."

"Hush, Lilias;" said Mossgray, "shall I have to train you to more philosophical modes of thinking? I did not think you were so heterodox. We must bring Reid and Brown and Dugald Stewart down upon you. Halbert himself has some metaphysics, dogmatical as their parent, Monikie. We shall have a regular breaking of spears, Lilias; though I think your friend Helen and you, on behalf of the poets, might rout the philosophers if you looked well

to your weapons. By the bye, I like that friend of yours—you suit each other well; and how does it fare with Mr. Oswald's resolution? Has he learned to break it yet with a good grace?"

"I do not hear now, since Hope is not at home to keep me informed," said Lilias; "but I think he must be melting; only his son is absent, and there is no visible progress. Mr. Oswald is an obstinate man, and Helen is proud; I see that there is an evident consciousness both on her side and his; but, Mossgray, you have done William Oswald harm; you have given him a rival."

"I Lilias?" said the old man; "is it Halbert? I should regret that."

"No, it is not Halbert," said Lilias; "I think Halbert is not eligible at present to be any one's rival in Fendie: it is Mr. Insches, Mossgray. I think your kindness

to Helen when they were all with us, has encouraged Mr. Insches to look over her low degree. It is your fault: if you had not noticed her, he would have given up what incipient admiration he had of poor Helen; but you gave him the countenance he needed."

"You are severe, Lilias," said Mossgray; "but I like the lad. He has a young man's natural weakness on some points, but there is good stuff in him; and who is to be successful —our grave friend William, or his handsome rival? I should think there was some danger. I fancy I must come to the rescue myself, and explain to Mr. Oswald, by my own experience, that resolutions were made to be broken. Does that suit Hope's tactics and yours, Lilias, or are you working more artfully?"

"Hope is my captain; I must wait for

further orders," said Lilias, smiling; "but, Mossgray, this has nothing to do with Halbert."

"Very true," said the old man. "I see you can hold to your original premises, Lilias; well, then, what of Halbert—let us return to our disputation."

"I think, Mossgray, said Lilias gravely, "since you suffer me to think on the subject, that it would be far better for Halbert if you made your decision soon."

"It is very sensible," said Mossgray, looking at her with his gracious smile. "I acknowledge that if I did not suffer you to think on the subject—which I fear would be difficult to do—I should lose a good counsellor; but do you know, Lilias, Mrs. Mense tells me that matters might be so arranged, as to make your inheritance and Halbert's

one;—could that be accomplished, think you ?"

It was very evident that Mossgray did not think it could, and the supposition was too harmless to call more than a passing shadow of colour over the pale cheek of his ward.

"No, indeed, Mossgray," she said, simply; "did I not say that Halbert was not free to be any one's rival ? I mean," continued Lilias with a deeper blush as she observed the inference to be drawn from her words, "that Halbert is very faithful to the northern Menie, and that I am Halbert's very grave and elderly adviser and friend, and must always remain so, did we live under the same roof all our lives."

Mossgray desired to have his ward's confidence; he did not smile at her inference nor at her blush; neither did he ask what

they meant; the delicate old man felt it was meet that Lilias should be shy of such confidences, even to him.

"Well," he said, "I will give up that; it would be very desirable no doubt, Lilias, and would solve our problem beautifully. If Halbert and you were good bairns I have no doubt you would adopt this solution for my particular convenience; but if, as you say, Halbert is already in bondage, and you are so wise and old as you tell me you are, there is no more to be said on the subject, and we must think of some other plan. Let me hear your proposal, Lilias."

Lilias looked up in some surprise.

"Did you think I was Helen Buchanan, Mossgray? No, indeed, I do not make plans. I only do what I am bidden when they please me, and dissent when they do

not; but I am no originator, Mossgray—you know I am not."

Mossgray smiled again.

"Well, Lilias, we shall suppose that I myself form the plan, according to your counsel, and that we make Halbert heir of Mossgray; and now there comes a grave consideration: what am I to do with you, my good Lilias? Will you be content with the little provision I can make for you, independent of these lands? Nay, if you are not like your friend Helen in making plans, I cannot have you resemble her in pride. I speak to you, you know, as if you had been Lilias Graeme; and your future—must I not provide for that?"

"No, Mossgray." Her head was bent down, but the animated unusual light played about her face like sunshine—her voice was

very low, and trembled as with some hidden music. She did not meet the kindly inquiring look which her guardian turned upon her; she only answered—"No, Mossgray."

"The future is cared for then?" said the gentle old man, in his delicate tenderness. "I must not ask how, Lilias, but I may believe and infer, may I not?—and guess that there is some one labouring under warmer skies for my good child, and hope that he is wise, and generous, and worthy of her. Tell him that I, too, will grow jealous for his honour and good report, though I am not told his name, and that together, you and I, who alone know him here, will bid God speed to his labour:—shall it not be so?"

Lilias could not lift her eyes just then, for the tears' sake, that were under their lids; but when she could, she looked up in simple

confidence into the face of her guardian. She did not speak, and they went slowly on, for some time, in silence. Her mind was in a pleasant, grateful tumult; she thought of the time when he to whose labour Mossgray bade God speed should thank the old man for his generous care of the orphan; and over the fair future she looked forth through the sunny haze of hope—the indefinite golden mist which has in it a charm wanting to the clearer landscape—the magic of the unknown.

But as they continued their walk, shy half-sentences fell on the ear of Mossgray—conveying a confidence which he received gladly though he did not ask it. How the unsettled family, in one of their short sojournings in a great, bustling, commercial town of England, had met this unknown—how he came from an Orcadian island far off

in the vexed Northern seas, and in his youthful energy was bound for the golden East—how he did so tenderly regard and honour the mother over whom Lilias still wept tears, because he also had a mother in his solitary home by the sea, and except this one nearest friend, was alone in the world; but Lilias did not tell Mossgray how her heart throbbed in glad wonder at sight of the ancient portrait, and at sound of the pleasant name in the old house of Murrayshaugh. It was but a fanciful resemblance, and the name was not an unusual one. The pleasure she had in this, she kept as one little secret gladness to herself. It was but a girlish, affectionate fancy; for the son of the far Orcades could have no connexion with the old southern family, whose last representatives were wandering on foreign soil, or

laid in strange graves. She smiled at herself for setting so great store by the shadowy resemblance of the portrait; it was too small a thing to tell Mossgray.

END OF BOOK II.

BOOK III.

CHANGE.

CHAPTER I.

The merry ploughboy cheers his team,
Wi' joy the tentie seedsman stalks.

BURNS.

"MOSSGRAY," said Halbert Graeme, as they sat next morning at their cheerful breakfast-table, "I wish you would come out with me to-day, and see these fields at Shortrigg—they are in a very bad state: small, oddly-shaped fields, "three neukit" as Saunders calls them, with quite a superabundance of hedges. I should like to

sweep those encumbrances away, and bring them into better working order. Will you come and see them, Mossgray?"

"Halbert, my man," said Mossgray, smiling, "I am too old to learn—even your training will scarcely make a good farmer of me, I am afraid; and I give you full discretion, you know."

"But, Mossgray," persisted Halbert, "I am sure you have no concern for those thriftless hedges; and good agriculture—"

"Is a very necessary, noble, and honourable art," said the Laird, "perfectly so, Halbert; and I am by no means a sentimental admirer of thriftless hedges; but I am old, you know, and not a good judge: you must take it into your own hands."

Halbert was not quite satisfied.

"Still, Mossgray, if you are not engaged—"

The good Mossgray could not deny the youth his request.

"Well Halbert, if it must be. Come then, let us set about this business of yours."

Halbert was very full of his undertaking. He began to tell Mossgray what his crops were to be, and the measures he would take with obstinate land, which was not naturally obedient to the discipline of the plough. The country looked very cheerful as they passed on. Round about, skirting the horizon on every side were ranges of low hills, some rich with fir-trees and softer young spring foliage to the very top; some dark with moss and heather unbloomed. Winding roads, white, far-seen lines, lost themselves among the hills, and through the trees, which divided their path from the river, glimpses of the wan water, flowing on full and broad to the sea, glimmered through the soft, gay, fluttering leaves

of spring. Turning back on the elevation which they had reached, the full Firth, quivering like molten silver stretched between them and the clear creeks and villages of the English shore, over whose stillness, muffled mountains watched in the background; and looming out against the pale sky in the West, his broad sides darkened here and there, as if with stationary shadows, rose the bluff Scottish hill, whose strong brow every night was crowned with the glory of the sunset. There was a hum of voices in the pleasant air, and ploughs were turning up the rich, dark, fragrant, earth, and the "tentie seed-man" stalked about the fields. The sky and the leaves were soft and fresh, so fresh and soft as they only are in the early year, and the refreshed land seemed to open its moist breast with gladness to the kindly processes of spring.

"I think there is something grand, Halbert," said the old man pausing to look back, "in the art, which out of that bare earth can bring seed and bread. I should rather have myself endowed with this wealth of the soil, were I young like you, than choose the barren, metallic fortune you were aspiring after a short time since. This, you know, pleases me; to inherit the soil and the sky, the seed-time and harvest, the sunshine and the rain of heaven; it seems to place us in more immediate dependance on the Maker of all, the great Suzerain above, of whom we hold this feoff, for the honour of His kingly name and the service of His people. I like it, Halbert—it is a greater gift than barren wealth. It pleases me to feel myself with Paul, a vassal—a *Knecht*, as your German has it—holding my lands under the fealty vow and oath of true service,

I would we did but better remember that we stood here feudatories of high heaven."

The youth assented modestly; he thought it did not become him to do more.

Mossgray stood for a moment longer, looking with loving eyes over his fair country, as it lay below the sunbeams, stirred with the spring; and then he turned to take Halbert's arm, and they went on again, resuming their former conversation about crops and ploughs and draining. The old man was not so ignorant of these matters as he called himself, and could give valuable counsel to the young experimentalist.

"But, Halbert," said Mossgray, "Lilias tells me I am injuring you in keeping you here so long, where you cannot pursue your own course as you desire to do; we

should rather talk of it than of those rural matters. What say you, Halbert?"

Halbert was rather startled; he did not know what to say, for, to tell the truth, he had quite forgotten the "course" which his kinsman assumed he was so eager to begin, and at present was perfectly content, and had no wish for change.

"I will be glad to do what you think best, Sir," he said, with a little hesitation.

"But the question is not what I think best, but what you wish," said the old man. "Is it the case that you are impatient of losing time at Mossgray, Halbert?"

Halbert was very honest.

"Well, Sir, to speak truly, no—I have not been thinking of losing time; but no doubt it is very necessary that I should begin."

"Begin what, Halbert?"

"To maintain myself, Sir; to cease to be a burden—"

"My good Halbert," said Mossgray, interrupting him, "I should never have spoken of it, if that were all; but Lilias does not hesitate to tell me that I do wrong to keep you undecided so long; so you must let me know what your own views are, and how I can help you most agreeably to yourself. Be honest, and tell me frankly; and when I have heard your own ideas, you must give me the privilege of my age, and let me decide."

There was a pause.

"I suppose," said Halbert hesitating a little, "that it must be business?"

"Does your gift lie in that way?" said Mossgray, smiling.

Halbert was a little annoyed, and jealous of ridicule.

"I think I might be able to do as much as I undertook," he answered, with a little warmth. "All sorts of men succeed in business. I do not think, with submission to your better judgment, Mossgray, that except perseverance, and industry, and a stout heart, there is any very special gift required."

"Bravely answered, Halbert," said Mossgray; "but these are invaluable qualities all, and as necessary for a conscientious country Laird, as for your great merchant of Glasgow or Liverpool. But let us speak more gravely; before you were so wise, and sensible as to come here to me, it was my custom to consider myself the last Graeme of Mossgray. Now, Halbert, supposing that our ancestors had entailed these lands, in what position would you have been?"

Halbert blushed and was embarrassed;

it was impossible that such a thought should not have sometimes entered the young man's mind; but he really had not self-interested views; and now he remained silent with too much good taste to disclaim, while he yet felt awkwardly uncomfortable under the fear of such an imputation.

"The race would have been resuscitated in you," said the old man; "you would have brought new life to the withering stock; for, Halbert, you are the only remaining heir of the Graemes of Mossgray."

"I have the name, Sir," said Halbert quickly, his embarrassment growing on him as he met his kinsman's eye; "it is the share of the family inheritance which comes to me; and the provision which you made for the helpless portion of my life, Mossgray, is more than a cadet's share. Now that

I am able to make use of the faculties which your kindness, and my good master's have trained and made available, I hope to do no dishonour to the name."

The Laird of Mossgray looked steadily into his young kinsman's glowing, animated face; the natural diffidence which subdued its expression, and the charm of its simple, frank manliness were very pleasant in the old man's eyes. He held out his hand and grasped that somewhat astonished, irresolute one of Halbert's.

"I have no fear," he said, kindly; "I believe you will be a good steward of your name; but remember, Halbert, that there devolves upon you an inheritance of old duties, old kindnesses, old generosities, along with the old lands; and that I will as surely leave you heir to all the good purposed and planned by your predecessors, bravely

and faithfully to fulfil and increase it, as I leave you heir of Mossgray."

Halbert looked up with a sudden start; the words did not carry their proper significance to him, for he had expected nothing like this.

"If I had thought you would weary of the lifetime which remains to me," said Mossgray, "I might have kept this secret from you, lest you should be tempted to wish my few remaining days shortened; but I have all confidence in you, Halbert, and what I give you is your right."

Halbert said something now; but it was said in so strange a tumult that the words would not bear recording. Nevertheless they answered their purpose, and Mossgray did not think the less either of them or of the speaker, because they were by no means elegantly put together, or rather were not put together at all.

And then the old man, more openly than he had done with Lilias, sought, and after some happy hesitation, received the confidence of Halbert; and then some arrangements were made, very much to the satisfaction of the heir of Mossgray. The old man decided that Halbert's "being settled" should be for some time delayed, but did by no means say anything to the detriment of Menie Monikie. To wait a little was all the condition he asked.

The fields at Shortrigg were unfortunate on this particular day. The young farmer had things in his head of more immediate interest than draining, and while he tried to keep his mind awake to the question of the superabundant hedges, incipient sentences of the triumphant letter, which should convey those wonderful tidings to the North, floated through his joyous head, to the entire

bewilderment of himself and his companion. It would not do; the young Utopia routed the sober science of agriculture, and Mossgray, with secret smiles, invented some kind pretext for sending Halbert home. It pleased the old man that the youth should be so pleasantly disturbed, and his eagerness to communicate his joy to the only home he had ever known, gave additional satisfaction to the gentle heart of Adam Graeme.

"I did not think," said Mossgray to himself half-aloud, as he lingered at the corner of one of the condemned "three-neukit" fields, watching the rapid progress of Halbert, as, bounding over all manner of obstacles, he carried his exulting heart home to Mossgray, "I did not think that my old pragmatical friend, Monikie, could have succeeded in producing such a lad

as Halbert; and I fancy I must see this Menie of his, and renew my acquaintance with her father. And I, too, have children. Resolutions, resolutions! what mockery they are; that I might have debarred myself such companions as these for the sake of words rashly spoken!"

He turned round, shaking his head, with a smile. Saunders Delvie was standing near, evidently listening. He had heard the conclusion of the soliloquy.

"Well, Saunders," said Mossgray, "I believe you do not agree with me?"

"Na, Mossgray," answered Saunders, harshly, "I haud by the auld law. Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oath."

"But I am speaking of resolutions, Saunders," said the Laird, "uncertain mortal resolves, ignorantly made, which better

knowledge shows us were foolish and wrong. You would not have me hold by anything so weak as that?"

"Ay, Mossgray," said the stern old man, holding his ground decidedly; "but an ane was wise, ane would make nae vows in ignorance; and when a vow was made, would keep it, if it was to the very death."

"But, Saunders, my man," said the good Master, kindly, "you know me well enough to know that I am not so wise as that; and I am too old to learn."

"Mossgray," said Saunders Delvie, "I'm just your serving-man, but I'm in years mysel'—and I can take nae rule but Scripture, though I would do as muckle to pleasure my Maister as most folk; but the Word's positive and clear. Vow unto the Lord and pay."

"You are more skilled in argument than I am, Saunders," said Mossgray, "but I think we can settle that point between us. The vow was a vow of offering—of special service, or special gifts, or of the sacrifices of that grand old symbolic Hebrew law. It did not by any means refer to such frail, inconsiderate resolutions, Saunders, as are common to this humanity of ours."

"Ay, but if it was a vow before the Lord," said Saunders, in his strong, harsh, emphatic voice; "if before the Lord, Mossgray, ye had spread out the ill that troubled ye, as the guid King Hezekiah did the proud words of the Assyrian langsyne, and put forth ane—I'm saying nae man in particular; it's a case just like what micht happen wi' onybody—put forth ane, I say, solemnly out of your heart and out of your house, as an ill-doer and a reprobate; would the

man that daured to break that no be man-sworn, Mossgray, having vowed before the Lord?"

There was a certain huskiness and tremor in the harsh voice of the old man. They stood together strangely contrasted; the Master in his benign and gentle humbleness, the servant in the stern and rugged strength of his pride.

"Saunders," said Mossgray, "the utmost vision of our wisdom, you know, is very poor and dim; and will the Lord hold you, do you think, to an oath made in ignorance, and dimly, as are all things mortal, even though you place it in His keeping? If what you vowed in His presence was an ill vow, Saunders, be thankful that this privilege of humanity is left to you, and that God gives you power to change—to change; it is a great gift this. That when

the purer light comes upon us we may follow its course wherever it travels, and that all our vain purposes and foolish vows are not bound on us, but that gratefully in sight of heaven we may throw our old encumbrances away, and change. We are growing old, Saunders, we are travelling towards the setting sun; and by and by we will lose this power. Think of it before it leaves your hands—mind what a gracious thing it is, given of God—and make merciful use of it while you may."

Mossgray turned round as he concluded, and bent his steps to his favourite waterside. He had not unfrequently had such controversies with his stern old serving-man; and pitying the forlorn heart which, out of its very excess of harsh, strong love, could debar itself so relentlessly from the mild humanities of nature, he had taken